

JEWISH ENGAGEMENT OF FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

A BRIEFING BOOK

Prepared as part of
The Jewish Community Study of Greater Baltimore

For



Prepared By
Ukeles Associates Inc.

Jacob B. Ukeles, Ph.D., President
Ron Miller, Ph.D., Research Director

January 2001

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr. Nancy Kohn Rabin, Chair

Mrs. Shoshana Cardin

Mr. Mark Friedman

Mr. Jeffrey Hettleman

Mr. LeRoy Hoffberger

Mrs. Marlene Kuntz

Mr. Joseph Meyerhoff

Mr. Stanley Minch

Mrs. Debra Weinberg

STAFF

Mr. Matthew J. Freedman

Mrs. Lisa Tobin

Mr. Lawrence M. Ziffer

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

February 8, 2001
Shoshana Cardin, Chair
Jewish Community Study of Greater Baltimore

Dear Shoshana,

On behalf of the Jewish Family Engagement Committee, I am pleased to forward this Briefing Book to you. These recommendations and supporting materials result from a year's work by our Committee and ASSOCIATED staff, with our consultants Dr. Jack Ukeles and Adele Simon. Their willingness to share generously their knowledge, experience, and critical insights, and to participate in hours of sometimes spirited conversations, have enabled us to present significant recommendations for the consideration of the Steering Committee and THE ASSOCIATED Board. We also have benefited from substantial information and advice from agency executives and staff of the CJE, JCC, JFS, and Rabbis and congregational lay leaders.

With the premise that family experiences significantly shape individuals' connections and engagement, we sought to discover the opportunities for, and impediments to, young Baltimore families actively engaging in Judaism and Jewish life. Concentrating on families with young children, where the windows of opportunity to impact identification and participation are typically the widest, we paid particular attention to moderately and marginally identified Jewish families.

The study focused on the needs and interests of families, trying to ascertain what kinds of experiences help to deepen and broaden their own sense of "Jewishness". The process of the study provided a remarkable opportunity to review both the needs and the already existing programs in a collaborative and coordinated way. In our review of local and national programs, and in our conversations with constituent agency and synagogue representatives, we recognized that our community already has many quality family-focused programs in place. Our challenge is to move from strength to strength: to begin with the impressive and promising initiatives already available, to capitalize on them, and to expand and replicate them.

As THE ASSOCIATED and its agencies, congregations, and Jewish organizations plan programs and initiatives for the next decade, we need to remember that the Jewish community clearly depends on the commitment and engagement of its members in Jewish life. Without programs focused on the Jewish engagement of families, we risk serious erosion of a strong Jewish community. Investments in our young children and their families, such as those recommended in this report, are critical for our community's stability, continuity, and growth.

The ambitious and far-reaching recommendations in this Briefing Book are the starting point. Now we seek a commitment for funding a comprehensive, inclusive and coordinated effort with agencies and synagogues to increase opportunities for, and access to, Jewish family engagement.

With your support, let the process begin!

Sincerely yours,

Nancy Kohn Rabin, Ph.D., Chair
Jewish Family Engagement Committee

CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	1
I. The Strategic Issue	7
II. Rationale for the Focus on Families with Young Children	7
III. View of Jewish Engagement.....	8
IV. The Research Strategy	9
V. Quantitative Data About Jewish Families with Children in Baltimore	10
VI. Jewish Engagement: The Voices of Parents of Young Children.....	20
VII. Current Primary Jewish Family Engagement Programs in Baltimore	42
VIII. Successful and Innovative Models in Other Communities.....	62
IX. Recommendations.....	64
Conclusions.....	68
Appendix.....	69

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1. Households with Children Under 18, 1999.....	10
Exhibit 2. Jewish Households with Children Under 18, by Type of Household and Number of Children in the Household, 1999.....	11
Exhibit 3. Jewish Households with and without Children, by Geographic Area, Baltimore, 1999	12
Exhibit 4. Income of Households with and without Children, Baltimore, 1999	13
Exhibit 5. Households with and without Children, by Years Living in Baltimore, 1999.....	14
Exhibit 6. Feeling Part of the Jewish Community, Families with and without Children, Baltimore, 1999	15
Exhibit 7. Use E-mail or the Internet at Least Once a Week, Families with and without Children, Baltimore, 1999	16
Exhibit 8. Jewish Connections of Families with Children, Baltimore, 1999.....	17
Exhibit 9. Inmarriages and Intermarriages (Rates Based on Number of Married Couples), Households with Children, Baltimore, 1999.....	18
Exhibit 10. Children Being Raised as Jews by Inmarriage, Intermarriage Status of Respondent: Baltimore, 1999	18
Exhibit 11. Day school, Jewish summer camp, trips to Israel, Baltimore, 1999	19

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Strategic Issue

How can the community best create opportunities for Jewish engagement that are most likely to be meaningful for families with young children? What kinds of communal investments are most likely to increase Jewish engagement of families with young children?

Rationale for the Focus on Families with Young Children

Families with young children are at the stage in the life cycle where Jewish identification and participation are typically the highest. A child's curiosity and questioning will often motivate a parent to become more interested in being Jewish and in connecting to Judaism. In this stage people may be the most open to opportunities to deepen Jewish engagement. However, this is a stage that finds people especially busy balancing family and career.

View of Jewish Engagement

Creating opportunities for Jewish engagement means helping people to connect to ways to be Jewish, to Judaism, and to the Jewish community. Today, people tend to create their own identities, responding to their own values and interests. Programs need to start where people are and not where the community wants them to be. There is no right or wrong way to be Jewish. Individuals must define a pattern and process of affiliation that is meaningful for them.

Research Strategy

The focus of this research is on illuminating policy and program choices in support of Jewish family engagement through a four-step process:

- An analysis of quantitative data about families with children from the Jewish Community Study Population Survey ¹;
- An analysis of qualitative data from focus groups and in-depth interviews with Jewish parents in Baltimore ²;
- An inventory of many of the current programs supporting Jewish family engagement in the Baltimore area; and
- A review of the most successful and innovative programs outside the Jewish community of Baltimore.

¹ The data in the Population Survey are based on a representative sample of 1,100 Jewish households in the Baltimore area, and are statistically reliable.

² The qualitative data are not statistically reliable; as in all qualitative research, the outcome is a set of insights to enrich the judgments of analysts and decision-makers.

The results of each research step were presented to a blue-ribbon committee of community leaders, who tested these findings against their own experience and knowledge. The quantitative and qualitative findings reinforce each other; the analyses of local programs and programs in other places similarly suggest some important common themes, which will be discussed below.

Quantitative Data

There are 24,300 Jewish children under the age of 18 living in 12,400 Jewish households, which represents 34% of the total Jewish households in the Baltimore area.

Nearly 8,000 (63%) of these households live in the two areas with the largest Jewish populations – Owings Mills/Reisterstown and Pikesville/Mt. Washington. Of these two areas, the former is much more “child-centric” than the latter. Fifty-six percent of the 7,600 households in Owings Mills have one or more children under 18 while only 24% of the 15,100 households in Pikesville/Mt. Washington have one or more children under the age of 18.

Nearly a third of the households with children report that they cannot make ends meet or are just managing. There are relatively few single-parent families (10%), but they are likely to have less income and greater needs for community support than other families. Households with children are more likely to have lived in Baltimore for less than 20 years than families without children.

About half of the families with children feel strongly attached to the Baltimore Jewish community compared with about 40% of those without children. One half of all households –with children or without—feel that it is very important to be part of the Baltimore Jewish community.

The Baltimore Jewish community as a whole is a community with strong attachments to Jewish believing, behaving and belonging. Families with children are even more so.

- Households with children are more likely to engage in Jewish study, belong to Jewish organizations, or light Shabbat candles on Friday night than households without children.
- Six out of ten families with children belong to a congregation; six out of ten families with children under 5 use Jewish pre-school.
- One-in-four households with children are intermarried. Almost two-in-three children in intermarried households are being raised Jewish – a relatively high proportion compared with other Jewish communities.
- Almost all Jewish children receive some formal education; a minority have had one or more intensive experiences (day school, summer camp, trip to Israel).

The Voices of Parents with Young Children: The Qualitative Data

The basic premise of this study of Jewish engagement of families with young children is supported by reports from focus group participants that they are more interested in connections to Judaism and the Jewish community now that they have children.

Focus group participants who are less actively engaged in Jewish life or are in interfaith families report an interest in deepening their connections to Judaism but often do not seem to get the type of information and/or welcome that is conducive to increased involvement.

Participants who are parents who are moderately engaged in Jewish life feel a responsibility to provide Jewish experiences to their children and are generally comfortable with their level of involvement. Those families who are heavily engaged with Judaism are most interested in deepening their commitment and find ways to do so.

Newcomers to Baltimore who are actively looking for Jewish connections and feel the need to “create roots” sometimes feel like “outsiders” to the native Baltimore Jewish community.

Families are interested in activities that fit easily into their busy lives, particularly on Sundays. They are interested in “one-shot” activities such as community service days, rather than those that require an ongoing commitment. Parents are enthusiastic about holiday celebration and acknowledge an attempt to observe Shabbat in some way.

Many participants favor outdoor activities.

All focus group participants had their children at the JCC or other Jewish preschool (compared with 60% in the survey). They all report a positive experience. Those who have “graduated” seem to miss the Jewish connection. Families in congregational family education (e.g. Mishpacha at Beth El) are positive about the program: fewer days of Hebrew School, plus a scheduled, required family participation in Jewish activities, makes it simple for them to feel they are doing the right thing for their families.

There was a strong feeling that Jewish Day Schools are either too expensive or “too Jewish.” Jewish day camps are widely used by participants. Negative memories of their own Hebrew School experience surfaced during the discussion; for some it appears to motivate considering Jewish Day School for their children. Some families report that they are discouraged from participating again in programs because they don’t live up to expectations. Cost is often cited as an obstacle to congregation membership.

Some participants report a lack of sensitivity to families that are conversionary and inter-faith.

Current Primary Jewish Family Engagement Programs in Baltimore

Increasing the communal focus on Jewish engagement of families with children does not necessarily mean creating new programs; it certainly does not mean starting over. Baltimore already has a rich array of programs aimed at families with young children whose primary purpose is Jewish engagement as well as others where Jewish engagement is a secondary or tertiary purpose. In planning for the future, community leadership needs to understand and assess what is in place already.

There are at least six congregations and four agencies known to be making a major investment in Jewish family engagement. These programs include: family school; curriculum connection programs for children in supplementary school; family Shabbat and holiday services; holiday and Shabbat family programs; family retreats; Chavurah programs; family Jewish reading programs; a Jewish family magazine; Jewish family cultural outings; a family educators network; Tikkun Olam projects; and outreach to intermarried families and Jews-By-Choice.

Successful and Innovative Models in Other Communities

The focus of this part of the Briefing Book is on successful and innovative programs that help Jewish families with children increase their connection to Judaism, the Jewish community and their own sense of being Jewish. While by no means an exhaustive list of such programs, they do represent important programming ideas, which could be adapted, in whole or part, to the unique conditions in Baltimore. These represent the frontiers of national experience; inclusion of a type of program on this list does not imply that the idea of the program is new to Baltimore; in fact in many instances, similar programs are already underway in Baltimore. Seven types of programs are presented:

- Family Educators in Congregations
- Early Childhood Family Education
- Home-based Groups (Chavurot) & Community Organizer
- Interfaith/Unaffiliated Outreach Project
- Public Space Outreach
- All-Day Family Sunday School for New Americans
- Community Membership

Recommendations

1. Expand the Use of the Jewish Pre-school as a Critical Gateway

The large percentage of Jewish families sending their children to a Jewish pre-school suggests that this is a wonderful way to reach significant numbers of families. There are already many programs to engage parents with children in pre-school; these should be replicated and expanded. Qualitative research suggests that families with children enjoy the Jewish connection of having children in pre-school, and that some have a sense of “let-down” after the experience is over, especially if day school is not an option. This suggests a need to focus on creating meaningful post pre-school education opportunities for Jewish preschool parents and “alumni”.

2. Offer Jewish Family Education with Every Congregational Supplementary School and in Other Appropriate Settings

A number of congregations (as well as the JCC) are making a substantial investment in Jewish family education. Their efforts need to be recognized, supported and replicated. The community, through THE ASSOCIATED and the Center for Jewish Education, can play an important leadership role in a variety of ways, including recruiting, training and funding Jewish family educators.

3. Develop a “Welcome to Jewish Baltimore” Marketing Campaign

Six out of ten of the respondents with children in the community survey were not born in Baltimore. In the qualitative research, participants expressed the feeling that non-native Baltimoreans are not always made to feel welcome in the organized Jewish community. Some people who have moved to Baltimore recently also expressed the concern that they do not know how to access information. The community needs to make a more intensive effort to create both the perception and reality of a welcoming community both to natives and non-natives.

4. Create Community-wide Vehicles for Holidays, Shabbat and Tikkun Olam Projects for Families with Children

National evidence, supported by our local qualitative research, indicates that parents of young children are very open to relatively specific, short-term family experiences such as Holiday celebrations, Shabbat, and Tikkun Olam (social action) projects. Many congregations and Jewish agencies have developed activities around such events and programs.

Community-wide experiences that families with children would enjoy might create a greater sense of community. Expanding the focus of ASSOCIATED Shabbat from a fundraising and marketing opportunity to a community-building opportunity is an example of this strategy.

5. Develop a Community Membership Program

Particularly for people who are interested in, but not deeply committed to, leading an active Jewish life, cost can be a significant barrier, especially for people who are just managing. The community survey indicates that about 30% of the families with children are just managing (or not managing at all). Baltimore, as a leadership community, should make significant progress on this important national issue. The Baltimore

J-LINC program, which lowers the cost of participation for young adults, could serve as a partial model for a community membership program. Of course it will be more difficult to agree on a community membership incentive for families with young children who are more likely to affiliate on their own than are young adults.

6. Develop a Jewish Communal Website for Families with Children

The community survey verifies that many Jewish families with children are avid users of the Internet and e-mail; and about half of the Internet users turn to the Web for Jewish information.

Participants in the qualitative study expressed the desire to have timely information about family activities. The development of a communal website for families with children would address the need for timely information. Such a website could be developed as a cooperative venture between THE ASSOCIATED, affiliated agencies and congregations.

Conclusions

Baltimore is a community with a strong Federation, active congregations and agencies and a wide array of offerings for families with children. This community has an opportunity to move to a new level of engaging Jewish families in the community, in their own sense of being Jewish and in Judaism.

There are a near-infinite number of good ideas and possible programs in support of Jewish family engagement. There is much going on already; the emphasis needs to be on improving and building on existing efforts and not reinventing the wheel. The recommendations summarized above and presented in more detail in Chapter IX of this Briefing Book suggest a clear strategy and set of priorities.

THE ASSOCIATED needs to make the congregations full partners in this expanded effort and to support collaboration and coordination, especially coordination between and among congregations and agencies.

Most important, THE ASSOCIATED needs to recognize the powerful opportunity for community-building represented by families with young children and to translate this recognition into leadership and resources.

I. THE STRATEGIC ISSUE

How can the community best create opportunities for Jewish engagement that are most likely to be meaningful for families with young children? What kinds of communal investments are most likely to increase Jewish engagement of families with young children?

II. RATIONALE FOR THE FOCUS ON FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Families with young children are at the stage in the life cycle where Jewish identification and participation are typically the highest. In established Jewish communities such as Baltimore, the vast majority of children receive some type of Jewish education at some point in their lives [Jewish pre-school, Jewish day school, “supplementary” Jewish education, etc.]. Issues of Jewish identity are particularly salient for Jewish households with children; regardless of level of involvement in Jewish life, families with children are most likely to need to resolve issues of identity. Thus it is at this stage that people may be the most open to opportunities to deepen Jewish engagement.

A child’s curiosity and questioning will often motivate an adult to become more interested in being Jewish and in connecting to Judaism. Some people speak of an “eight- to 10-year window of opportunity” to connect Jewish families – from pre-school to bar-mitzvah or bat-mitzvah. This is also a stage when people are especially busy balancing family and career.

National discussions about increasing the Jewish involvement of families with children often focus on different types of families. Some programs focus on completely unaffiliated/disconnected Jewish families, while others focus on moderately identified Jewish families with at least some [albeit minimal] existing linkage to Judaism.

Studies of Jewish identity indicate that relatively few Jews are deeply engaged and committed to their Jewishness; on the other hand, relatively few are completely disengaged or alienated. Most Jews are in the middle – somewhat, but not deeply, involved in being Jewish, with a wide range of patterns of belief and behavior associated with how people view “being Jewish.”

Reaching out to these families with some connection to Jewish life is often a key strategic decision since they have at least some pre-existing interest in being Jewish and are easier to locate than those who are totally disengaged.

Similarly, connecting interfaith families to Jewish life is a central, still-debatable issue in the United States. Programs to engage these families typically focus on those households in which the Jewish member still self-identifies as Jewish, and the non-Jewish member is not opposed to the family maintaining some Jewish connection. A significant proportion of young interfaith households – which varies from community to community, from perhaps one-fourth to over half – raise their children as Jewish, as Jewish and something else, or have not yet finalized their decision about Jewish identity. Some of these interfaith families affiliate with a congregation, particularly in communities where a synagogue markets itself as “welcoming” the intermarried.

III. VIEW OF JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

Creating opportunities for Jewish engagement means helping people to connect to ways to be Jewish, to Judaism, and to the Jewish community. In pursuing this agenda, it is important to be aware of what has been learned about Jewish identity formation in recent years.

People tend to create their own identities, responding to their own values and interests. The family plays the major role in influencing choices – the community is a supporting player. The communal focus is on creating “opportunities” for engagement.

Jewish engagement is fluid and dynamic – people change with life cycle transition, exposure to opportunities and roadblocks, and personal factors. Programs need to start where people are.

“Affiliation” with a congregation, JCC or organization are only some ways to be Jewish.

IV. THE RESEARCH STRATEGY

The focus of this research is on illuminating policy and program choices in support of Jewish family engagement through a four-step process:

- An analysis of quantitative data about families with children from the Jewish Community Study Population Survey ³;
- An analysis of qualitative data from focus groups and in-depth interviews with Jewish parents in Baltimore ⁴;
- An inventory of many of the current programs supporting Jewish family engagement in the Baltimore area; and
- A review of the most successful and innovative programs outside the Jewish community of Baltimore

The results of each research step were presented to a blue-ribbon committee of community leaders, who tested these findings against their own experience and knowledge. The quantitative and qualitative findings reinforce each other; the analyses of local programs and programs in other places similarly suggest some important common themes, which will be discussed below.

³ The data in the Population Survey are based on a representative sample of 1,100 Jewish households in the Baltimore Area, and are statistically reliable.

⁴ The qualitative data are not statistically reliable; as in all qualitative research, the outcome is a set of insights to enrich the judgments of analysts and decision-makers.

V. QUANTITATIVE DATA ABOUT JEWISH FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN IN BALTIMORE

BASIC DEMOGRAPHICS

There are approximately 24,000 Jewish children under the age of 18 living in 12,000 Jewish households, representing 34% of the total Jewish households in the Baltimore area.^{5,6}

Exhibit 1. Households with Children Under 18, 1999

AGE IN YEARS	JEWISH CHILDREN IN JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS	
	NUMBER	PERCENT
0 – 4	5,200	21
5 – 13	13,300	55
14 – 17	5,800	24
TOTAL	24,300	100

⁵ An additional 1,200 children live in Jewish households, but are not being raised as Jews.

⁶ An additional 3,400 households include adult children (18 & over) only.

Most children live in two-parent households; about 2,000 children live in the 1,200 single-parent households. Single-parent families represent a small group (10%) but are likely to have less income and have greater need for community support.

The modal or typical household with children has two children under 18, although a large number of children – nearly 10,000 – live in households with three or more children under 18.

Exhibit 2. Jewish Households with Children Under 18, by Type of Household and Number of Children in the Household, 1999

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN THE HOUSEHOLD			
	ONE	TWO	THREE OR MORE	TOTAL
Married, under age 65	3,400	5,300	2,400	11,100
Single parent, under age 65	400	700	<100	1,200
65 and over	<100	<100	<100	<100
TOTAL	3,800	6,100	2,500	12,400

GEOGRAPHY

The two areas with the largest Jewish population – Owings Mills/Reisterstown and Pikesville/Mt. Washington include, about 2/3 of the households with children in the Baltimore area. The former includes about 4,200 households with children and the latter about 3,600 families with children. Of the two, the former is much more “child-centric” than the latter: 56% of the Jewish households in Owings Mills/Reisterstown include one or more children compared with only 24% of the Jewish households in Pikesville/Mt. Washington. Families with children are a significant presence in all the areas where Jews live – including central Baltimore, Park Heights, and the Towson, Lutherville and Timonium corridor.

Exhibit 3. Jewish Households with and without Children, by Geographic Area, Baltimore, 1999

	HOUSEHOLDS WITH ONE OR MORE CHILDREN UNDER 18 (%)	HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT CHILDREN UNDER 18 (%)	TOTAL
OWINGS MILLS/ REISTERSTOWN	56	44	100% 7,600
PIKESVILLE/ MT. WASHINGTON	24	76	100% 15,100%
PARK HEIGHTS	33	67	100% 3,000
BALTIMORE CITY	25	75	100% 4,300
TOWSON- LUTHERVILLE- TIMONIUM CORRIDOR	43	57	100% 2,400
OTHER AREAS*	29	71	100% 7,100
ALL AREAS	33	67	100% 36,600

*Randallstown and Carroll County

INCOME

While adequate income is no guarantee of Jewish family engagement, the cost of living Jewishly is a national issue that also concerns the Baltimore Jewish community. Low income makes it difficult for a household to belong to a congregation or to a JCC, provide intensive Jewish education, camping or trips to Israel.

Eight percent of the Jewish households with children report incomes of under \$25,000 a year; another 14% report incomes of \$25,000 to \$50,000 a year. Based on the results of the community survey, an estimated 1,000 families with children are living on incomes of \$25,000 or less; another 1,700 families are living on incomes of \$25,000 to \$50,000.

An even more compelling source for concern about the cost of living Jewishly is found in the subjective assessment of a household's financial situation. Nearly a third of the households with children report that they cannot make ends meet or are just managing. Those among this group of 4,000 households who are deeply committed to living Jewishly, however self-defined, will find the resources or make the necessary sacrifices. For those whose commitment to being Jewish is marginal, cost can absolutely be a roadblock to greater engagement.

Exhibit 4. Income of Households with and without Children, Baltimore, 1999

INCOME	HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN (%)	HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT CHILDREN (%)
UNDER \$25,000	8	17
\$25,000 TO \$49,999	14	24
\$50,000 TO \$99,999	46	32
\$100,000 OR MORE	32	27
TOTAL	100	100

YEARS IN BALTIMORE

Respondents in most households with children have either been born in Baltimore (41%) or have lived here for less than 20 years (40%). Relatively few (19%) have lived here more than 20 years but were not born here. Respondents in households with children are much more likely to have lived in Baltimore for less than 20 years than those without children.

Respondents in families with children who have lived in Baltimore less than 20 years are more likely to feel that they are not part of the community than those who are natives or lived in Baltimore for more than 20 years (34% vs. 25%)

Exhibit 5. Households with and without Children, by Years Living in Baltimore, 1999

YEARS IN BALTIMORE	HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN (%)	HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT CHILDREN (%)	ALL HOUSEHOLDS (%)
LESS THAN 20	40	19	26
20 YEARS OR MORE	19	27	24
BORN IN BALTIMORE	41	54	50
TOTAL	100	100	100

FEELING PART OF THE COMMUNITY

About half of the families with children feel strongly attached to the Baltimore Jewish community compared with about 40% of those without children. One quarter feel somewhat connected and about a third feel not at all or only a little connected to the community.

IMPORTANCE OF BEING PART OF THE COMMUNITY

About half of the families with children as well as half of the families without children feel that is very important to be part of the Baltimore Jewish community.

Exhibit 6. Feeling Part of the Jewish Community, Families with and without Children, Baltimore, 1999

FEELING PART OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY	HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN (%)	HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT CHILDREN (%)	ALL HOUSEHOLDS (%)
NOT AT ALL/A LITTLE	29	34	32
SOME	25	27	26
A LOT	47	38	42
TOTAL	100	100	100

USE OF INTERNET

Two out of three households with children use the Internet or e-mail at least once a week; of these, less than half have accessed a Jewish website.

Exhibit 7. Use E-mail or the Internet at Least Once a Week, Families with and without Children, Baltimore, 1999

	HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN (%)	HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT CHILDREN (%)
YES	67	47
NO	33	53
TOTAL	100	100

JEWISH CONNECTIONS

The Baltimore Jewish community as a whole is a community with strong attachments to Jewish believing, behaving and belonging. Families with children are even more so.

62% of families with children belong to a congregation – compared with 47% of households without children. Households with children are also more likely to engage in Jewish study, belong to Jewish organizations, or light Shabbat candles on Friday night than households without children. They are about as likely to attend Jewish cultural events, and somewhat less likely to have gone to a Jewish museum than families without children.

Exhibit 8. Jewish Connections of Families with Children, Baltimore, 1999

	YES (%)	NO (%)	TOTAL (%)
BELONGS TO A CONGREGATION	60	40	100
ATTENDED A JEWISH CULTURAL EVENT WITHIN THE LAST 3 YEARS	60	40	100
ATTENDED A JEWISH MUSEUM	55	45	100
USUALLY OR ALWAYS LIGHTS CANDLES ON FRIDAY NIGHT	47	53	100
BELONGS TO A JEWISH ORGANIZATION	46	54	100
PARTICIPATES IN JEWISH STUDY	36	64	100

INTERMARRIAGE

One-in-four households with children are intermarried. Three-in-five children in intermarried households are being raised Jewish – a relatively high proportion compared with other Jewish communities.

Exhibit 9. Inmarriages and Inter marriages (Rates Based on Number of Married Couples), Households with Children, Baltimore, 1999

TYPE OF MARRIAGE	HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN (%)	HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT CHILDREN (%)	ALL HOUSEHOLDS (%)
INMARRIAGE	64	84	74
CONVERSIONARY MARRIAGE	11	6	8
INTERMARRIAGE	25	10	17
TOTAL	100	100	100

Exhibit 10. Children Being Raised as Jews by Inmarriage, Inter marriage Status of Respondent: Baltimore, 1999

CHILDREN ARE BEING RAISED	INMARRIAGES (%)	CONVERSIONARY MARRIAGES (%)	INTER-MARRIAGES (%)
JEWISH	99	98	62
JEWISH & SOMETHING ELSE	<1	<1	20
NOT JEWISH	<1	1	14
UNDECIDED	<1	1	4
TOTAL	100 [N= 15,700 Children]	100 [N= 2,500 Children]	100 [N=4,800 Children]

JEWISH EDUCATION

Six out of ten families with a child or children under five report that they have a child in Jewish pre-school.

Almost all Jewish children receive some formal education; a minority have one or more intensive experiences – day school, summer camp, trip to Israel.

Exhibit 11. Day school, Jewish summer camp, trips to Israel, Baltimore, 1999

	YES (%)	NO (%)	TOTAL (%)
GONE TO A SUMMER OVERNIGHT CAMP WITH JEWISH CONTENT	40	60	100
CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN DAY SCHOOL	31	69	100
GONE ON A TRIP TO ISRAEL	21	79	100

VI. JEWISH ENGAGEMENT: THE VOICES OF PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN

In July/August, 2000, four focus groups were held in order to add a qualitative dimension to the quantitative data developed from the community survey. In addition, 11 individuals who could not come to a focus group were interviewed in depth (via telephone).

The intent was to explore the views, attitudes and experience of Jewish families with young children in Baltimore to find out what engages them, what types of connections to Judaism, Jewish learning, Jewish experiences and the Jewish community they are likely to find personally rewarding and fulfilling, and what the roadblocks are to engagement of young families. It is precisely these kinds of personal reflective conversations that are impossible to have in a telephone survey and that make a focus group valuable. **As in all qualitative research, the goal is to glean insights, not to measure outcomes.**

Unlike the sample in a community survey, focus group participants are not expected to be statistically representative of the community. At the same time, participants were recruited to include Jewish families with young children who are involved in being Jewish in different ways and to different degrees. A special effort was made to involve parents who have had experience with Jewish engagement programs. Families were recruited to include children attending full-time Jewish Day Schools, Jewish preschool, afternoon Hebrew Schools and/or Sunday school as well as those not in any Jewish educational setting. Interfaith families were included in all groups. A comparison of the profile of qualitative research participants with the quantitative data shows that in general the participants tended towards the middle of the range of situations in the community—somewhat less likely to participate in Jewish study or to have a child enrolled in a Jewish day school, but more likely to belong to a Jewish congregation or a Jewish organization and to have a child enrolled in a Jewish preschool. That is, the voices of the most strongly identified and the least Jewishly identified were less likely to be heard in these discussions.

THE ISSUES

Eight issues were explored in these conversations:

- Are moderately affiliated and/or interfaith families with young children interested in increasing their connection to being Jewish, to Judaism and to the Jewish community?
- What kinds of involvement are families interested in?
- What seems to differentiate families that are already involved, those that are becoming more involved, and those that are minimally involved? Is there a subgroup that is pre-disposed to being more Jewish (seekers)?
- What are the critical success factors that make good programs for building engagement and involvement?
- How does, and how can, the Jewish community identify and engage Jewish families?
- What are the roadblocks to Jewish engagement of Jewish families with young children?
- Which existing programs appear to be more effective than others in engaging Jewish families? How can existing programs be improved?
- Are special involvement or “outreach” programs influential in the engagement and retention of Jewish families with young children or are the families pre-selected (self-selected) based on a predisposition to get involved?

FINDINGS⁷

In general, the study’s basic premise seems to be confirmed: participants report that they are more interested in connections to Judaism and the Jewish community now that they have children.

Are moderately affiliated and/or interfaith families with young children interested in increasing their connection to being Jewish, to Judaism and to the Jewish community?

The moderately affiliated families feel a responsibility to provide Jewish experiences for their children.

- *I just feel a sense of responsibility that they understand what it is to be Jewish and the history, what it means to be a Jew and that’s the minimum that I want to give them ...*
- *The importance for me is that they have the education what it means to be a Jew and the responsibility of being Jewish and then they can take it from that point, which I didn’t, if they want to continue it ... if they have a good experience with the system – the day care, the schools, and the Hebrew blessings, I think they will have a more positive continuance of it...I don’t think I had a very positive experience*
- *We talk about the responsibility of being Jewish ... both my in-laws were Holocaust survivors so we talk about that responsibility and what they went through without going into too much detail, as much as they can handle... we also talk about the agencies that helped them get started here and about giving back to the community...it’s very personal...*

⁷ Quotes from participants are identified by a “bullet and italics.”

- *When you talk about decision-making ... I made a decision to send my kids to Milldale, it was a conscious decision that I chose to send them to a camp that has some kind of Jewish relationship; the same thing with sending them to kindergarten at the JCC, we're very involved with Project Mishpacha*
- *We do homeless lunches ... through the public school system once a week we make a homeless lunch to give back and those are Jewish values in addition to hopefully they're values for everybody*

Moderately involved families are comfortable with their level of involvement.

- *The idea of deepening my commitment ... I'm reasonably comfortable with my level and my family's level of commitment to Judaism ... I have no doubt in my mind that I'm going to stray or that my wife is going to stray and kids are kids and you always wonder what your kids are going to do in the next minute, let alone for the rest of their lives*
- *What is necessary to bring your kids up? – no matter what, my kid's never going to speak Hebrew – so whatever amount he gets is sufficient, it's giving him an awareness that it exists, he understands that, he'll be able to read it, he'll be able to read sufficiently if he's in services to read prayers, he'll never speak it, I accept that*
- *4 kids, fulltime work, it (learning Hebrew) is not a high priority for me now, my focus is more spirituality*

Some see their own involvement increasing when their children are older.

- *I definitely see myself getting more involved as my children get older, right now we're on day-to-day ... my mother had a Bat Mitzvah at 40... I'd like to do an adult education program in 5 years*
- *Classes, etc., not now but maybe in the future when my life is a little easier*

Those families who are heavily engaged with Judaism are most interested in deepening the commitment and regularly find ways to do so.

- *Each year on Rosh Hashanah we make a commitment, we add something more intrinsic to our lifestyle that's more Jewish ... my husband was raised to the left of Reform ... he was the only living person I ever met that did not keep Yom Kippur or Passover in any manner, shape or form... we've been together for 24 years, married for 15 and it's a very strange blend, I'm the Shiksa in my family because I don't cover my head and I wear pants ... when we started our married life I said I'm going to light Shabbat candles and Kashrut is not an option ... each year we added ...when we had the kids we added blessing the children on Friday night, one year we added the Motzi, and the kiddush and Havdala ... now for my son's Bar Mitzvah we added benching ... each year we look to add, to deepen that and I'm finding that with the kids the more tradition we can throw on top of them ... we make the holidays fun and as a parent wanting my kids to continue to be Jewish and marry Jews and raise their children Jewish, the only way they're going to keep the tradition is if they're so entrenched in it, that it's so built into their lives that it's not different*
- *We've also done that in a graduated fashion ... we started off not doing much, we had a Jewish wedding, we didn't observe Shabbat, Kashrut ... through the years we've taken on those obligations and it's been great, every one you do enriches your life*
- *For what comes next ... I don't know if that's a personal thing ... if I can say to the community, in order to expand my Jewish experience the community should do x because there is a lot of stuff out there ... in terms of the dissemination of knowledge, there may be a way to improve that but there are a lot of educational opportunities*

Interfaith families and those with very weak Jewish backgrounds are also interested in deepening their connections to Judaism and the Jewish community.

- *I feel a sense of responsibility to send them to a Jewish Day school, study the Hebrew for their Bar Mitzvah ... that's what I feel is necessary ... I didn't have a strong Jewish background*
- *I also have married a non-Jewish girl and she is not converted but we did agree to raise the children as Jews because I think it's a very important thing to do ... it was more important to me ... she didn't have a problem with that*
- *I come from a divorced family, my husband has the same background ... I'd like things for somebody like me and my sisters who don't know much about the religion ... I'd like to get it and pass it on to my children but where you start with that I don't know*
- *I'm Jewish, my husband is not ... my dedication is to my Judaism and to raising my kids Jewish ... as I got older I steered away from religion but had started feeling a need to get back to my faith, especially with children ... especially important in an interfaith home if picking a religion for your child*
- *I'm going to look into converting ... I'm more interested since we have kids*
- *Would like education things for non-Jewish people joining a Jewish family ... general information for people getting into marriage or Jewish relationships*
- *My husband is Jewish, I'm not ... we plan to join but we have not yet picked out a synagogue, I want my husband to do research ... get information from friends who belong to different synagogues ... 3 nights a week (for Hebrew school) is a huge commitment ... other factors (will consider) ... whether it's Reformed or Conservative, the family friendliness of it, how child friendly they are, the kinds of things they have that we can be involved in, convenience, location*

When asked about the importance to them of “Jewish people marrying Jewish people,” converts and intermarried parents say somewhat sheepishly that it’s “very important” to them, and add

- *It's the do as I say, not as I do*
- *Off the record ... I may have married out of my religion but I'll be damned if my kids marry out of religion ... it's hard enough to have strength in a marriage without adding one more problem ... I'm hoping I'm giving them enough of a foundation*

“Transplants” to Baltimore are actively looking for Jewish connections and feel the need to “create roots.” They sometimes still feel like “outsiders” to the native Baltimore Jewish community after more than 20 years in the community and would like programming geared to those who’ve moved to the city.

- *A lot of us have talked about being transplanted from somewhere else ... that's helping to create this affiliation, we are looking to create roots*
- *Baltimore is a very different kind of community... I grew up in Boston, pockets of Jewish areas but everybody's spread out ... the only way you got to meet other Jewish people was to do USY and that was a great experience ... Baltimore is an unbelievably unique community, it's very incestuous, it's very difficult to break into ... people grow up here and they die here...and they don't move more than 4 or 5 miles the next generation might move 10 miles...*
- *I think community is important and being in a Jewish area is important to maintain kids, Jewishness and the passage from generation to generation*
- *It would help if there were more events oriented to people who've moved to Baltimore like for Passover when you don't have family*

What kinds of involvement are families interested in?

Families are interested in Jewish activities IF they are convenient and easy to fit into their lives. It is important but doesn't necessarily take precedence over other things although parents appear to become more concerned as the teen years approach. Most accept the need to provide Jewish education in the form of Hebrew School; some seek out new innovative approaches. Day School is an alternative considered by some families; generally only those heavily involved in being Jewish or those who have such strong negative remembrances of Hebrew School that Day School is the favored alternative. Both forms of Jewish education have parents expressing both satisfaction and concern. Parents who participate alone or with their families in Jewish education like the fact that they are modeling desirable behavior. When asked about what they do that's "Jewish," the most common response from families with young children is an enthusiastic affirmation of holiday celebration and an acknowledgement of an attempt to observe Shabbat.

- *We celebrate the holidays and try to light candles on Friday night*
- *Most Friday nights we try to light candles*
- *We try to do a dinner and light candles*
- *We make a real effort to go to every TGIF during the school year*
- *We try and celebrate Shabbat evening as a family, try to go to some of the family related services*
- *We try and do, don't do it all the time, to have a Friday night Challah and say a blessing ... go to Shul for the High Holidays, try to get more involved in things like the Purim Carnival*
- *We worship as a family*

Most Jewish families with young children look for Jewish activities to participate in with their children but they are most interested in those that are "one-shot" such as festivals, or community service days, rather than those that require an ongoing commitment particularly if there are age appropriate activities. Sundays are a favored day.

- *We're always looking in the paper for the Sunday activities ... there was a wonderful program at the Maryland Historical Society ... we do the Jewish festival, Purim carnival, anything Jewish, cultural we try to attend ... any kind of family fun activities associated with Jewish*
- *We belong to the JCC – attend community Holocaust commemoration*
- *I'd love to do something on Sundays once in a while*
- *She sees her Dad every second Sunday so it's difficult to do planned things on the weekend if they are every weekend*
- *We've done community service kinds of programs with the kids, usually around a Jewish holiday, planting trees, helping in the food pantry ... too bad there isn't an ongoing Mitzvah Project that would take place every Sunday afternoon from 1 to 3 ... it would be a way for them to get their state hours*
- *We're more interested in separate events than ongoing every week types*
- *Anything with my children and that will hold my children's attention ... readings that are short and interesting*
- *We do Mitzvah Day*
- *Family karate at the JCC is really good*
- *For programs with the family one of the things I feel strongly about is community service*

- *The Maryland Historical Society had a program with spice boxes, we sang songs ... in early fall there's a big Park Heights Jewish Fair with plays and vendors, it's marvelous, we do that weekend every year ... Jewish carnivals and Purim, we go*
- *Anything cultural related to museums ... if it's Jewish we try even harder to get to it*
- *The parking lot of Owings Mills Mall is not exactly a sylvan setting*
- *Jewish American Festival ... ever since they moved it to Owings Mills it sort of dwindled out ... I don't remember the last one*
- *Program at the J on Christmas Day*
- *Used to have the Jewish Festival every year ... people didn't support it as much after awhile*

Single parents would like things geared to them.

- *I'm a single parent ... I wish there was a group, not just to date but to have someone to do something with*

Many participants favor outdoor activities.

- *We look for outside things like building the Sukekah*
- *We've done more environmental things 'cause we like being outside*
- *Outdoor things are really good ... everybody likes a party outdoors ... Israel celebrations, Walk for Israel*

Some are not interested at all.

- *As a family, on Sunday we play soccer, wouldn't think of doing something Jewish*

The age of the children is a major factor. The short attention span and disruptive behavior of very young children as well as the reluctance or competing activities of older teens limits family participation in Jewish programs.

- *Can't go to services now with my children (6,3) they're too disruptive*
- *2 teenagers often refuse to do anything ... they still do things but they kind of draw the line at Shabbat services, they'd rather sleep*
- *Depends on the age of the children in terms of doing it (social action activities) as a family...that's the hardest thing with Project Mishpacha is the age span of the children and finding something that's appropriate for everybody, you can't take a 3 year old down to a homeless shelter to help ... you sort of have to pick and choose*

As the teen years approach parents appear to be more concerned with Jewish activities for their children.

- *We're faced with the high school decision now ... 4 months left in the decision-making process... one of the strong considerations is putting him in a public school if he continues his Jewish education ... I know the Netivon program through Chizuk Amuno is said to be phenomenal, he said he would voluntarily go to that ... so the feedback from the kids on that ... they've had events where they combine the Krieger Schecter Day School kids with the religious school kids and they've been all wonderful experiences on every level whether it was the lower school or the middle school so there seems to be a lot more going on that's positive*

- *Chizuk Amuno has a high school program 2 nights a week for kids who don't go to Day School and he likes it and it's pretty serious higher level Jewish education ... and the other draw of it in addition to the religious and intellectual is the social because they see all the kids they went to school with all that time and this year they're talking about an Israel trip ... it's been a very positive experience and it's been a big commitment for a high school student to take on*
- *My son was a Maccabi athlete ... he's 16 and he's very emotionally upset that this is his last year ... he was President and I've served as Chairman and on the Adult Board ... it's kept him in the Jewish fold, it's social not religious*
- *Our middle son has been getting a lot more out of confirmation and wants to go to services more and so we're going to go*

Parents worry about their teens and several gave good reviews to the TNT – Top Notch Teen – Program at the JCC. Some expressed hopes for the new teen center at the Owings Mills JCC but also felt that it needed more publicity as well as publicity for the option of only paying for a teen membership if other family members didn't use the JCC.

- *What I'd like to see is like the drop-in center, reasonably but loosely organized, with Jewish flavor and Jewish opportunities but not necessarily hard Jewish content ... opportunity for Jewish kids to associate with other Jewish kids*
- *One summer my daughter did choose the Top Notch Teen program at the JCC on her own*
- *Now that the kids are getting older if there was a teen program that was fun that would appeal ... I think they do have something at the J ... something like that would be OK*
- *The JCC has recently gone back to teen nights*
- *They're opening a new Teen Center at the J ... it will be their place with adult chaperones ... the old way with game rooms and dances and basketball ... I hope it will be open late enough so the kids can do their homework and then go hang out with their friends*
- *Now that my kids are getting to their teens I'm more anxious for them to be with Jewish kids so they don't go in the wrong direction*
- *Now that my son drives he can go to the JCC by himself ... especially if only he has to join the J ... we don't belong anymore because it's too far*
- *The Shlock Rock Concert was the best thing – music that was Jewish – and I almost didn't find out about it in time to take the kids – now all we listen to in the car is those tapes*

For those in special involvement programs like Project Mishpacha, the benefit of fewer days of Hebrew School, as well as a scheduled, required family participation in Jewish activities, makes it simple for them to feel they are doing the right things for their families.

- *This (Project Mishpacha) was quite an attraction for 2 reasons, one, certainly for kids to have one less day of Hebrew School and honestly, that is a big attraction not only for the kids, but in terms of car pools and things like that, but me, the opportunity to participate with the kids and show them that I'm going to Hebrew School, Mom and Dad are coming, we're learning and forcing them in some sense to go to services 'cause in a typical Hebrew School kids are there 4 or 6 hours a week and there's resistance and they don't want to go to services as opposed to let's go – it's an opportunity to do things together and to further my Jewish education*
- *This year they came out with that whole list of different things (community service activities) that appeal to different age groups and that was nice*

- *Because you're in Project Mishpacha you already have a channel in which you do these activities, a lot of times when you don't have any specific affiliation you're spread here, you're spread there – my husband did the Salvation Army truck with my son, my daughter was only 2 – but that was if we pushed ourselves to find the Social Action thing that was going on ... a lot of time what you need, through whatever you're affiliated with, is a list of things – here's what we'd like you to do – it pushes you*
- *In return for not going one day a week, the family has to participate in a certain number of family activities ... morning services, evening services, they have to do a charitable project, basically you have to get credits – 5 of these, 6 of these, 1 of these... the family participates with the child in the Hebrew education*
- *Each year you go to the 4 family programs, 8 services... you do them as a family*
- *I guess in a way because it is a year-long program and it involves family planning... there are other things we do but we schedule time for the weekday classes for the services on Friday or Saturday, we pick the things we're going to and so we're making plans and it does encompass the whole school year*
- *It structures it for you so you don't have to do other things specifically in addition so it helps you get through the year and makes sure you have services and a minimum number of activities*
- *My son, he's happy, he's 10 years old in Project Mishpacha, he sort of likes going, he comes home we ask him did you have fun? He says Yeah... it's hard to get him out of the house and away from the TV but when he's there he seems to be involved, the teachers seem happy and he seems happy, so we're happy*

In spite of the general satisfaction with the Project Mishpacha program, parents express concerns.

- *You go to Hebrew School and it's completely separate from anything else ... it doesn't connect with your real school, it doesn't connect with your activities... you're forced to go to Hebrew School and learn some foreign language that maybe you're going to use for your Bar Mitzvah but never again... there doesn't seem to be enough of how Judaism fits into everyday life*
- *We've been in the program for 5 years now and every 2 years they've changed their Family Director so there isn't a whole lot of continuity ...*
- *There's still a question of the Hebrew education the kids are getting and lacking that extra day... concerns that the kids who go 2 days a week are not getting the same quality Hebrew education in terms of learning Hebrew and Jewish history as the kids who go 3 days a week*
- *We don't know in terms of outcome studies; this program's only been in existence 6 or 7 years how many of the kids who've graduated from the program – what their level of involvement with Jewish life or continuing Jewish activities or Jewish learning*

Parents in many different adult Jewish learning programs like the fact that they are positive role models for their children.

- *Last year my wife and I both enrolled last year in the Melton program ... it's a 2 year program of Jewish thought and philosophy and history and ethics ... my wife takes it every Tuesday morning and I take it every Tuesday night and we're able to discuss the lessons ... it's a different approach (from Mishpacha) we tell my son we're going out to school for grownups and that you're never too old to learn about Judaism*
- *I'm constantly telling my kids, I'm going to study tonight at the HEBREW University, I'm going to the JEWISH Community Center*
- *What we do together as a family or what we do individually with the community ... there's a big difference ... there's lots of things my wife and I do involved in the community ... we don't bring our children along to these kinds of things ... like tonight, it sort of involves them, it's family related ... things like being involved in organizations*

- *By going with your kid (to Project Mishpacha) it shows you're interested in this stuff too, it's Jewish involvement, but we do it a different way in our house ... we tell our boy, I have to leave now, I'm going to school, I'm going to learn about being Jewish some more, and Mommy goes in the morning, so they know that we're going to grownup school and we never stop learning from nursery school to being a grown-up parent, we never stop learning about being Jewish and our history ...*
- *The other aspect of socializing together, we found we've been able to do that at things sponsored by our synagogue and we go to the Jewish Festival or an Israel celebration and we're members of the JCC so the context of everyday life is interwoven with our Jewish aspects and identifications as well so everyday life becomes Jewish life and vice versa*
- *I'm very involved with Levindale so I take my kids over there and they help lead the Seders at Passover, at Chanuka we go and visit the different levels and they sing the Chanuka songs and light the candles ... I've started a Junior Levindale Auxiliary which is a younger group so that the kids can have meetings just like the parents have which was giving them the opportunity to set up their own things ... we did a talent show for the residents ...*
- *Mishpacha ... is basically Hebrew School ... it's a trade-off: instead of your kid having to go to Hebrew school 3 days a week, your kid gets to go to Hebrew School 2 days a week and instead you get to go once a month*
- *(Director of Mishpacha) says kids will remember Family activities more than formal classroom learning ... my guess is it makes more of an impression on kids when we participate in activities ... it does make an impression on kids if they see their family participating not only in classroom things but stuff outside ...*

What seems to differentiate families that are already involved, those that are becoming more involved, and those that are minimally involved? Is there a subgroup that is pre-disposed to being more Jewish (seekers)?

Positive as well as negative early memories related to Jewish experiences and synagogues are a key factor in shaping and influencing adult Jewish involvement.

- *My father was a contractor and I remember going with him to the Shul that had these incredible stained glass windows and huge chandelier*
- *My most positive memories as a kid of being Jewish were being in my grandfather's Shul ... it's interesting, everybody's (memories) seem to focus on something standing, something unified, something we can cling to ... I was the Rabbi's granddaughter so we got away with a lot ... the memories of being in that Shul, the choir, sitting on the Bima because I was still small and allowed to do that ... just such incredibly strong memories that tie you so closely to being Jewish, they never leave you*
- *I grew up in a large Reform synagogue ... I grew up in a totally non-Jewish area, I was the only Jewish kid in the class ... I teach the confirmation class and my connection to that is strictly through the love I got of Judaism pretty much through youth group and religious school on Sunday mornings, Hebrew school and that connection for me, other than family those were the only Jewish people I knew ... so the youth group experience, I went to Israel, and quite honestly the dashing young Rabbi ... so I have some of the building memories but it's mostly the people*
- *I was urinated on in the boy's shower in gym class because I was Jewish ... I'm proud to be Jewish, pleased to be Jewish and wouldn't want to be anything else for all of the trouble it's been*
- *Traditional Hebrew school ... wonderful memories of my Bat Mitzvah ... it was a nice experience ... we were in an Orthodox congregation so I guess for the time it was a fairly enlightened kind of ceremony ... then it wasn't until I was an adult that I sort of reentered Jewish life*

Negative memories of Hebrew school appear to be motivators for enrolling children in Jewish Day Schools and for adult learning. Reviews of traditional Hebrew Schools that the children of participants attend are also mainly negative.

- *My husband also had that experience (hated Hebrew school) and that was part of the reason we started looking into Jewish Day Schools, although I think they're in general better now, Hebrew schools, our experiences were both negative and we wanted not to do that to our children*
- *My husband hated Hebrew school which was one of the reasons he was not averse to putting our kids in Day School*
- *My parents really tried hard to get me to go to Hebrew school and it was the quality or lack of quality that I just didn't like going, I just didn't enjoy it, they forced my brother but not me ... I remember the Rabbi, my synagogue experience was nothing like it is here, which is very positive here, it was very cold ... as a family we observed all the holidays and that was all wonderful but the synagogue experience was very lacking but I guess I always really wanted to learn more and know who I was, so I thank them now for not forcing me and making me resent it because as an adult I became a Bat Mitzvah and attend all the adult education classes given in the community*
- *We talked about Hebrew School not making much of an impression ... that's because there's a disconnect between what's going on in formal Hebrew School classes and not only family, but real life ...*

- *If you want a pleasant experience (in Hebrew School) you sort of have to weigh it, I don't know what the right answer is ... I don't know a single person who went to traditional Hebrew School who liked it*
- *I think it's the responsibility of the educators (in Hebrew schools) to have it not only an education but to have the attitude, we're going to make this fun and joyous where the kids say they want to learn this and not make it a labor and that's an attitude they have to create there so the kids want to go there and have fun doing it*
- *So far my children are enjoying it (Hebrew school) in terms of learning Hebrew, especially the 2 oldest because they're girls, my son had a hard enough time just learning to read, let alone learning to read Hebrew and then having to go to Hebrew School after school*

Reviews of Day Schools are mixed.

- *Hard to find teachers at Jewish Day School who are good teachers and also speak Hebrew*
- *Ever year I said we'll take one year at a time and decide...my son is so happy there (Day School) ... there's a problem with teachers everywhere, and you have to hope for the best no matter what, every year I cross my fingers ... he gets up and says I'm going to Shul ...and I can tell you nobody in my family when we grew up said I'm going to Shul on Saturday morning so I couldn't ask for anything more, he's 11 and his friends go and he's looking forward to it and I'm like fhying, I'm so happy because I like to go too so it's really exciting*
- *I've had two in Day School and we've chosen not to send our youngest and it's partly cost, partly because I'm concerned ... my oldest one did very well and I think he was the kind of kid they want to have but he, they have not come out with a really warm feeling about being Jewish ... I think I attribute their feelings about being Jewish more to what we've done as a family than what they've gotten in the school, except for the Hebrew language which was a real motivating factor for me to send them to Day School ... it's what I'm struggling with –*
- *I really wanted them to have the language ... I'm not sure that that's worth the cost and the lack of response ... part of it is financial, they try so hard, maybe they don't have the money they need, maybe they don't have the staff they need, talking about teachers again – the quality of the education was so irregular, parts of the education were excellent but there were so many parts that weren't and they did very little to address that ... there were just too many bad experiences, particularly with my second one, to justify my sending another child*
- *Even though my kids are in Jewish Day School one of the things we wanted ... I'm at Beth El ...was we wanted to set things up so our Jewish Day School kids felt a part of the synagogue ...*

What are the critical success factors that make good programs for building engagement and involvement?

Families are often disappointed about programs they attend and discouraged from participating again because they don't live up to their expectations. The reality does not live up to the publicity.

- *Program sounds good on paper but its never quite what it sounds like ... synagogue had "Pizza in the Hut" on Sukkot ... I brought the kids, thought it would be fun, it was chaotic ... it gets late, the Rabbi goes on and on, the kids are hungry ... it's not fun!*
- *Never turns out so good ... sounds good ... Mitzvah Day turns out to be stupid ... great idea never pans out*

Some suggest that cooperative communal efforts are necessary to get adequate numbers of people and adequate financial resources to ensure successful programs.

- *It's difficult to get a working mass of people from your own congregation to do all the things you need to do... if our eighth graders want to do something, there's 12 of them, unfortunately in our society you need scales of size to make things happen ... every Shul has a Mitzvah Day once a year ... so many things could be accomplished if they worked together ... the thing is, whether there's the will in the community to do it in a concerted fashion ... the thing is the Shuls have the competitive almost antagonistic relationship ... at some level the Conservative Shuls in JTS and United Synagogue work together but in terms of attracting membership and retaining membership and doing things together there's a lot of in-fighting and I'm better than you are*
- *Synagogues don't have the resources to do something in outlying areas but a communal group or THE ASSOCIATED could partner with synagogues*

How does, and how can, the Jewish community identify and engage Jewish families?

Preschool is a major communal opportunity. People choose preschool wanting a link to the Jewish community and then have a more difficult time choosing elementary school options because of cost and auspices. 100% of the participants have or have had children in Jewish preschool, primarily at the JCC. This suggests that many of those who do not have their children in Jewish education, afternoon Hebrew school and/or Sunday school, are in fact linked to the Jewish community during the preschool years. It appears that more parents would consider Jewish Day Schools if the price were more reasonable and the curriculum was less intensely Jewish, more like a continuation of the JCC preschool program.

- *We have 2 boys, 10 and 6; both were at the JCC pre-kindergarten and then went into public school ...*
- *The Jewish pre-school experience was my most connecting experience, the beginning of my connection, whole families came together... the same families over time 6 to 8 times a year and the children were in school together*
- *I've met a number of people that have children in the JCC pre-school in Owings Mills and a lot of them say I can't affiliate right now because, frankly, I'd love to but I can't afford it ... I've actually made the suggestion that they need to figure out ways, that's a perfectly good way to plumb an interest there and the J doesn't really want to get involved in that and I can understand why, they don't want to be seen as favoring one synagogue over another ... on the other hand there's that connection, those people are connected and there ought to be some way, it's a great hook and if you don't grab them then they may be lost until 4th grade or 7th grade*
- *Both of our children went through JCC kindergarten ... we've wrestled with this since the moment our first son left kindergarten, what to do and we're still wrestling with it now that he's about to go into middle school and we're at that point again, what do we do, and we're thinking about maybe looking at Beth Tfiloh for a couple of years and then pulling him back out ... but the Jewish community from our perspective, I'm speaking for both my wife and myself, has really blown it ... so many people go to the JCC and go to kindergarten and then they disappear... I think a lot of them would stay put there if they just continued from kindergarten to 1st grade, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th and then you wouldn't have to come up with all these crazy ideas of how to keep people in the Jewish community ... they would just go to school and they would learn ... they don't want it as hard as Schechter, it was just too much, it's too Jewish for us, we just didn't want to deal with it ... I have a number of friends who are Catholic who send their kids off to Catholic school and I gotta tell you the Catholic Church have it right, they are smart ... they don't even have to think about how to keep people in the flock, they provide great education at a reasonable, almost pitifully low price, and these kids just go, they have to compete to go, and it's amazing what they have to do to get into these schools – they have to*

be active in the parish, they stay there and they're involved year after year and they create their own community

- *The JCC isn't affiliated with Reform or Conservative or Orthodox, it's more general*
- *Part of the problem is cost and part of it is the reluctance of the Jewish community to support any kind of private education ... I'm on committees of Baltimore Jewish Council and its worked aggressively against support of any kind of private education ... public position of the community that it doesn't want to do much for private education for 2 reasons – one is it's going to take people away from Hebrew schools and I understand that could wreck the congregations and that's a very reasonable point of view but they also think they're somehow going to subvert public education but if you're looking to get people involved in the community there's just no better way to do it*

Those families who are minimally involved or knowledgeable about Judaism particularly liked the JCC's dissemination of information and regret when that ends at the beginning of public school.

- *We do observe most of the holidays, we got a lot of information about all the holidays from my son's school (JCC)*
- *One of the things I really liked at the JCC ... they sent pamphlets home with prayers and information about holidays ... I saved it and knew to repeat it to my son*

The high percentage, 72%, of families who use or have utilized Jewish Day Camps suggests another opportunity for enhancing or solidifying ties to the Jewish community.

- *It will be interesting when my son is 6 and out of the JCC and I'm not there every day ... I don't know what we'll do ... he'll go to Camp Milldale, that's a conscious decision*

Many of those who are more involved feel it requires a more personal invitation to “join” the Jewish community and some see it as their role

- *Best way to bring someone into Judaism is to show them the beauty of it not the Oh my G-d I can't eat that and I can't do that ...*
- *It's very personal, the best way to bring the unaffiliated in to what we think is so wonderful is to somehow take that person by the hand and invite them ... from a resource standpoint it's more effective to create systems so that those people who do want to be involved, who are involved can thrive ... as I grow and my family grows I'm finally comfortable, I'm able to say to someone, see what I'm doing, see what we're having, this is a wonderful thing, why don't you join me ... with the reality of resources, I love the word outreach but in reality the outreach has to be to those people who are there because we can beat our heads against the wall trying to get the people who aren't involved in*

What are the roadblocks to Jewish engagement of Jewish families with young children?

The main obstacles to involvement of Jewish families with young children are:

Family is not from Baltimore

- *I'm at a disadvantage, I'm a transplant*
- *One of the disadvantages of not being a Baltimore native ... you know, and I guess other people who've done more Shul-shopping and more Shul experiences than I have, are aware of all the various Day School and other non-public school opportunities but post public-school opportunities, after-school opportunities ...*
- *Just because my husband was born and raised here and everyone knows everyone I feel very connected, not to religion but to the community*
- *Baltimore Jewish community can be a difficult one to venture into ... very closed, somewhat incestuous*
- *Not being from Baltimore ... it's a very closed community... really not that connected*
- *Some programs are more closed and established ... you go there and they ask your name and I say I'm not from here so forget trying to figure out who I am ... very closed kind of community*
- *A lot of people here are from Baltimore, grew up here and have friends from high school ...still feel like transplants even after all these years (27) ... our closest friends are all ones who've moved here from somewhere else ... even as members of the congregation for 15 or 16 years there's still a tiny residual outsider feeling*

They feel this “transplantation” is NOT an issue in the Orthodox community.

- *One part of the community that actually handles it really well is the Orthodox, there's so many of them coming from out of town, and it doesn't matter where you came from, there is no Baltimore, they don't really care, you're part of our Shul, you're one of us, and they fully embrace them*

Distance

Several participants spoke of distance as an issue.

- *The schlep, the distance ... my joke in Beth Israel when we were debating the move was that it's a longer drive from Owings Mills to Randallstown then it is from Randallstown to Owings Mills ... we have Towson*
- *We moved to Carroll County because the housing values were more affordable but now regret that we're far from the JCC*
- *We're not actually members of the JCC, the main one is 20 to 30 minutes away*

Not surprisingly, however, as 80% of the participants live in Owings Mills or Reisterstown, most disagree that distance is an obstacle to participation.

- *Coming from a bigger place, Baltimore is very geographically compact, that's one of the things we like about it*

Cost

Cost is spoken of frequently as an obstacle for synagogue membership.

- *We're not members of a synagogue ... my daughter was in pre-school at the J and now she's in public kindergarten... And she doesn't remember much but we're not in a position now to join ... financially other things are a priority ... commitments for the next few years ... the High Holidays would be one of the main reasons to join but I've heard you have to pay on top (of membership for High Holidays)*
- *Having been a Beth Israelite from 2 weeks after I moved to Baltimore, I have not strayed from that flock so they had pre-school, they had the religious school, they had confirmation class and prices were reasonable and for a working schlep some of the tuitions can be rather steep and I've never asked for a reduction in fee so I knew there was a Schechter Day School, some of our friends send their kids there, I simply can't afford it. If I made an extra twenty or thirty thousand dollars a year it would be a different story*
- *We went once to the Purim Carnival at the JCC, it's free for members ... at Shul it costs thirty or thirty-five dollars for a pencil, it's a little annoying ... the kids want tickets for the games, it gets ridiculous for what you get*
- *I would like my 10 year old to have a Bar Mitzvah but we haven't joined (a synagogue) anywhere yet because I've heard it's very expensive ... I need him to be going to the JCC for after school care and I'm giving them double payments ... if they could make it so if I wanted to go to Shul I could without paying a lot of money*

The cost of Day School attendance is a roadblock to consideration of Day Schools as well as a significant concern for those who are struggling to pay for Day Schools.

- *Cost is a factor for a lot of families ... this year (Day School) tuition for 2 kids is \$18,000*
- *It's after-tax dollars, you look at \$18,000 for that versus 500 bucks for Shul membership, religious school tuition and since it's outside of the public school arena, tax-wise you can call it "religious training" which then makes it, at least on my taxes, a deductible expenditure ... maybe I'm the epitome of the penny-pinching Jew but for me cost is, if not the number one concern, the number two concern in just about everything I do*
- *We go nuts every year trying to figure out how we're going to pay tuition for the kids ... it's an impossible task every year ... I've yet to figure out how we've done it every year*
- *There are stipends and scholarships ... we looked into it a few years ago when my husband was unemployed, but the maximum is 50% so it's still nine or ten thousand dollars a year for 2 kids ... that's \$1000 a month – basically that's my husband's salary, I could literally have them direct deposit it into the Schechter tuition account*
- *The other problem with the Day Schools ... they used to let you put your tuition on a credit card, they stopped it ... they said it was costing them too much ... they should've come to the parents ... I would have gladly paid the service charge because it made it easier to pay on a monthly basis ... you got the benefit, I wasn't using it then to get frequent flier miles but it meant I could defer it and when you have 2 kids in private school that's what you do – you float your debt every month and eventually it catches up with you*
- *I had one in pre-school at the J and one in child care and I can totally relate to just taking my check, I work for the state, the lady at the J would laugh 'cause every 2 weeks I'd come and that was it ... I struggled when I put my daughter in public school ... maybe if there was a reasonably priced program, not necessarily a full day school, but something, some kind of a transitional thing between the public school and the private Day school, that exists for high school kids, maybe there could be something for elementary*

Lack of programming for children with special needs

- *I wish it was more (Jewish involvement) but I wouldn't be able to take my younger son unless they had a special needs program ... I have a child of 6 who doesn't talk, I'd like to get him more involved in special activities ... the JCC has been part of my life ... money was always tight and they've helped me out especially when I found out about my son being autistic*

Older / Younger Children

Having older children, even with younger ones also, begins to limit family involvement even among the most committed families.

- *Shabbos dinner is even getting difficult now with the older kids; Sarah hasn't really pushed yet but Friday night is football/date night in high school, there's this party, there's that party and of course there's the social pressure to go to the mall with the non-Jewish friends on Saturday and we'll go to the mall in the afternoon but the morning is for services ... we still do Yom Tov together as a family*
- *My 16 and 19 year old have both been Bar and Bat Mitzvah and confirmed ... they do go to High Holidays with us and that's it*
- *At a younger age they have had a very positive experience (with Hebrew school) and then they don't want to get up on Sunday*
- *A lot of things are hard to do because of my other daughter's age (2 years old)*

Elitism

Certain activities are perceived to be out-of-reach, particularly for non-Baltimoreans.

- *Too exclusive ... there's an elitism for some things in the organized part of the Jewish community*
- *It's made very clear, you can do the BJC (Baltimore Jewish Council) thing and sort of get away with it ... if you want to do THE ASSOCIATED thing and you don't give big bucks you can't*
- *You're either part of the club or you're not part of the club ... we're not going to be part of the club, there's just no way, I just don't have that kind of money, I make a pretty good living but we're talking people giving huge amounts of money*
- *We, my wife and I, got involved just because we wanted to and I did BJC and my wife was President of ORT but you're really made to feel you're not part of the club*
- *It's difficult, particularly for people not born here*

Lack of childcare / Attitude towards children

Lack of childcare makes choices necessary and type of childcare available is also an issue for parents.

- *If I bring my children I want them to do something Jewish ... acting out the experiences, learning about the holidays*
- *I grew up Christian, we always had childcare during services ... now we both can't go to a service and sit through it*

- *If you could have baby-sitting or some kind of care provision for young children during Shabbat services at the synagogue it would be a great help to those who want to go as husband and wife instead of one or the other having to stay with the child ... it's not very convenient or friendly for parents of young children who want to maintain their attendance at Shabbat services*
- *Not just Shabbat, Kol Nidre ... there's no baby sitting in synagogues, we always have to make a choice, usually it's my husband who goes, but growing up I used to like going to Kol Nidre services, Yom Kippur is certainly an important holiday*

Some would prefer to have more tolerance to young children in the main sanctuary than provision of separate programs.

- *Where I go for the High Holidays, they do except for Kol Nidre (provide child care) but not regularly for Shabbat I guess I personally would prefer that they tolerated young children in the service, I've gotten lots of dirty looks ... lots of congregations have Junior Congregation or Tot Shabbat ... that was usually my compromise, I'd go into the main congregation for a while and then take them out but we do get a lot of dirty looks*

Lack of sensitivity to families that are interfaith and conversionary

Converted parents of children in Hebrew school and even in Day schools are upset when asked to participate in or send information about “Jewish” family history with no acknowledgement of the rest of the family history. They do not get the type of information and/or welcome that is conducive to increased participation in the Jewish community even though participants say, “A lot of families I know are mixed and most are bringing up their children with Jewish education.”

- *I had no Jewish upbringing ... I converted to Judaism in 1986 after a Catholic upbringing, a very strong Catholic upbringing ... what I find most difficult about interactions with the synagogue is everybody usually comes with some experience ... in Project Mishpacha they'll have a special program where we're supposed to bring a lot of family into it and memories for the children and it's kind of one-sided, my husband's family*
- *It is uncomfortable*
- *It's really touchy ... everybody has a different feeling about it ... I'm not always open about saying I'm a convert, it depends on the situation ... in my children's Jewish Day School they had a family history night and we got a letter home before saying basically please make sure that everything you bring in is only Jewish ... which to me means they don't want any part of my side ... I was very hurt by it and eventually someone complained and months later I got a phone call apologizing and saying they didn't mean to say what they said but there were no shades of meaning in the letter, it was very clear ... I guess I've taken on a lot of my husband's history which I share with my kids but it's hard ... this was a family history night, not a Jewish history night ... I found it very awkward, I didn't quite know how to explain it to my kids*
- *My wife is converted and we've run into that and we talk about it and we toss it up to the people involved and doing it just have a lack of sensitivity*
- *It makes you uncomfortable but you move on*
- *At Project Mishpacha the Cantor has converted to Judaism ... maybe a reaching out, a communication from his background that he could bring out in Adult Ed classes*
- *They have some classes on interfaith marriages but that's not our situation ... we've melded my history with our family history*

- *Many of the “fence-sitters” have one parent who is not Jewish ... need more programming that is specific, of a dual nature in some way ... if Rabbis and ministers worked together ... we’re not welcoming to non-Jews so we’re pushing the Jews out of Judaism*
- *I don’t keep it a secret that my husband isn’t Jewish ... sometimes I feel like a single Mom even though I’m not ... I feel like a fifth wheel ... I don’t do speakers, balls, art auctions, I’m uncomfortable going by myself ... the synagogue won’t allow him to join because he’s not Jewish ... at the JCC I had to join as a family because I’m married even though my husband didn’t want to use it*
- *Programs for or about Converts ... they’re Jewish ... we need to acknowledge that as a special place and be excited about it.... It means the retention of our community, the regeneration of it ... we need to be welcoming in tone, have a creating and retaining tone ... our kids also need to learn it’s a fact of life*

Lack of communication/awareness

If families don't belong to a synagogue or the JCC, they don't know of opportunities and programs – learning, cultural, or social action, and even if they do belong somewhere, they don't know of opportunities or programs offered through other synagogues, etc. Families would like better information and dissemination of opportunities for those activities across synagogue lines, perhaps on the Internet; 80% access it at least weekly.

- *I guess some of what's missing is a central community bulletin board ... you have to belong to the JCC or you have to subscribe to the Jewish Times ... there's no central free access ... you have to belong to something to get the access*
- *If you belong to one synagogue you don't know what's happening at the others*
- *I stopped my subscription to the Jewish Times, I'd definitely like an Internet site*
- *I get my information from my Shul and from the JCC because we're members of both, not the Jewish Times, I stopped it because it is all just advertising*
- *I need help searching for a synagogue to join, I need to call JFS and ask them to send stuff*
- *I get the JCC newsletter but there's so much stuff in it ... wish there was a separate newsletter for families of what's going on in the JCC and the synagogues ... it could even have a nominal fee*
- *In winter because of Hebrew school we do a lot ... in summer I really wish there were more things and they would announce things more*
- *Unfortunately there's no central clearing house ... I've gone to things in the Orthodox community because I teach in the Sunday School with teachers who tell me about them*

Time/priority

Busy lives, particularly of the children, limit family participation in Jewish activities.

- *We lead very busy lives ... how do we fit it all in ... we do seek activities, we might prioritize about it*
- *I work full time, our kids are pretty actively engaged in school, social and athletic activities ... there's the resistance of the kids to Jewish things, it's not something they would choose to do as an activity*
- *I know there are a lot of other activities out there ... can't take advantage of them because of time or scheduling*
- *Time is a major factor or a major excuse ... would like to get us to more services*
- *It's hard now with young children and both working long hours, we hardly have time to be together*
- *It's hard ... the exhaustion factor, work, family ... our kids do less sports than some ... as they get older it takes more mental energy*
- *Time commitments, mainly of the kids I would say the activities they participate in, school and sports*

Fear of “too Jewish”

Many participants claim they do not choose Jewish Day School for their children because there are inadequate choices, mostly schools that are “too Jewish.”

- *There are no real choices in this community ... there's the Schecter which is really heavy, I mean it's completely regressive, then you have Beth Tfiloh which is Orthodox and you have Rambam which is really Orthodox ... for most of the community in terms of total numbers Beth Tfiloh and Rambam are off the table, and even Schecter is off the table, and Baltimore Hebrew has not really done well so there may be numbers (of Day Schools) but not ... I'm sensitized by this because we're in the process of really thinking about this, we've been agonizing over this and there just isn't a good choice around here ...*
- *We always thought when our son got to high school we'd send him to public school so he'd have a more rounded student body, but he's loving it (Day School) so much he wants to stay ... don't want them to think everybody's Jewish ... we made a conscious decision to send him to camp in the south that has very few Jewish kids because we want him to be exposed to other people ... they do something that they call “devotion” a non-denominational service and it was a problem for my son and his Jewish friend at the beginning, they didn't want to do it because they thought it was Christian ... we explained to him in a letter, same G-d different path ...*
- *As Jews I realize we're trying to save the flock and I fully agree with that to some extent, on the converse side of that though, if we fully insulate ourselves, if we all fully join on the bandwagon to re-tribalize ourselves, are we defeating the purpose of sending our Jewish kids to Jewish Day Schools because what is it if we're all back ... not making any disparaging remarks about the Orthodox because I think it's wonderful to have the community ... do I honestly think in today's society that you can live like the extreme folks living near Park Heights Avenue? ... No, I don't believe you can live like that. I believe that's ultimately going to implode*
- *I was not raised very religiously ... Jewish Day School – that's a pretty narrow view of the world ... everyone's white, Jewish, middle class or better and religious ... that's not the real world, it's pretty much of a culture shock after that and half a day of Hebrew is a bit much*

Lack of programming or not?

Some feel there are not enough options for family activities but most disagree. When participants were presented with “model” innovative programs from other communities the reaction was generally that some form of the program already existed in Baltimore.

- *There are not a lot of family events in this community from a Jewish ideal ... it's just non-existent. The individual Day Schools have their Purim Carnivals ... the JCC has a Purim Carnival ... it's so crowded it's ridiculous it's this mass of humanity crunching in on this little building*
- *There are a million things do in this community and that's part of the problem, part of the challenge ... not that they're necessarily family things ... it's pervasive in my life ... the fact that there is so much, even for me is overwhelming ... I think there's a lot out there if one wants to take advantage of it*
- *There's so much here, it amazes me what your choices are ... most are open ... once I seek activities I know they're there*

It's too easy to be Jewish in Baltimore

Some feel that the very Jewishness of Baltimore inhibits participation in Jewish activities.

- *Part of the difficulty in trying to program for part of the community that already feels like they're immersed in the community ... they're living in Jewish times and places*
- *Here the people who aren't involved and there are a lot of them, they don't have to be because everything just like comes*
- *Baltimore Jewish community is all over, you don't feel like you need to seek it out*

Which existing programs appear to be more effective than others in engaging Jewish families? Are special involvement or "outreach" programs influential in the engagement and retention of Jewish families with young children or are the families pre-selected (self-selected) based on a predisposition to get involved?

Families appear to seek out some special involvement program such as "Project Mishpacha" because it meets their needs. They are "retained" for many years because it continues as long as any of their children are in the program.

- *Switched synagogues this past year because it's easier to get to Hebrew School and it's a different Hebrew School ...*
- *Belong to Project Mishpacha ... it's very family-centered*
- *We made a very specific choice in Project Mishpacha ... we liked Beth El anyways but we thought it would be a good program and it's actually worked out pretty well so I think my son has done reasonably well and interestingly, my wife who did convert, she finds it really interesting because she uses it as an opportunity to learn lots of things which is for her the first time; for me some of it I find pretty interesting some of the things I actually enjoy going to and I find it different from when I was a kid ... I actually asked the question why didn't you teach us this when we were going through the first time and it sort of makes sense, you were too young to understand but I just find the program to be very, very good*

Parents praise youth groups.

- *For my kids youth groups is a really wonderful thing that reinforces their Jewish identity ... it fulfills a lot of wonderful functions, social, religious, etc. to connect with other Jews ... the purpose of USY, sometimes the advisors like to jazz it up and talk about the spiritual development but basically it's so Jewish boys meet Jewish girls and get married and have Jewish children*

The Chavurah, in-home, intimate Jewish group experience, appears to have a long-lasting impact on those who began through their synagogues or through their children's schools.

- *We are members of a small Chavurah in our Shul ... we do something about once a month as adults ... about every 2-3 months we try to do something including the kids ... Chavurah predates my arrival in Baltimore so most of the kids are now high school, upper grades and a lot of them are into college, not too many little kids left and the Chavurah kind of stopped growing, getting new people about 6 years ago ... we*

try to do religious events, social events and the kids go – sometimes it's YOU'RE GOING! And sometimes it's yah, we're going.

- *My 6 year old son went to the JCC Day Care and Kindergarten and then to public school ... We have a Chavurah of 6 families that we get together once a month for Shabbat dinner, we do a service and that has really been very meaningful for me, I can't speak for my kids, as they get older they speak for themselves, it kind of was an outgrowth of the Mishpacha program in pre-school, there were a couple of families from there and some from the Jewish Day School, we started when my oldest was kindergarten or first grade and that's really been very nice*
- *When my kids were in pre-school there was a program called La Mishpacha and it went for a year actually I did it for a couple years but it restarted every year and they had maybe 6 programs a year where the parents would study and the children would do an activity with the teacher... and we'd celebrate a different ... I guess we had like 4 different things we looked at and each one had 3 meetings – a study meeting and a celebrating meeting... like Shabbat we'd study about it and then have Shabbat dinner or something like that and that was a real positive experience ... it's actually where I met a lot of my friends who are still my friends and we still celebrate Shabbat together*

How can existing programs be improved?

Participants suggest changes.

- *I'd like to put a pitch in for adoption, Jewish adoption ...to begin or initiate Jewish families ... we have a program with Jewish Family Service that's under-funded, always hanging in the balance all the time ...*
- *Wish the J had a library / reading room*
- *Eventually supposed to be a coffee shop at the J ... you're not supposed to eat in the lobby ... if they had a room where parents can sit and schmooze*
- *You've got to worry about neutral territory and you've got to worry about cost and timing ... there are so many variables and so many divergent interests ... need different tracks for young children, older children, adult learning*
- *The community is not competing so much as competing for time*

Participants suggest making choices about where communal resources are spent.

- *Baltimore is so unique ... everywhere else 1 or 2 choices ... so many choices ... if you were from an Orthodox home you used to have 2 or 3 Day Schools, no other alternatives, so whatever monies were being funneled into the system from THE ASSOCIATED, whatever, went to those Day Schools ... now those are still active ... but there are probably 10 Jewish Day Schools, forget the religious schools for a minute, being fed limited funds into that so there is a pool of money going out into a whole bunch of different arenas ... it's good in that you have a choice, it's bad in that there's not enough money to cover it*
- *If you have limited resources ... do you spend them on the core or do you spend them on the fringe? ... where do you get the best bang for your buck? ... and I agree with you completely, it's a wonderful dream and dreams can become reality, that you can affect the unaffiliated, that you can bring them into the fold, that you can introduce them to the beauty of what we do and you can't denigrate the aspiration to do it, but when you do have limited resources you do have to make choices about how they're spent ... maybe community resources are best spent on the core, sending kids to day school who are interested instead of disseminating it out into the community*

VII. CURRENT PRIMARY JEWISH FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS IN BALTIMORE

Increasing the communal focus on Jewish engagement of families with children does not necessarily mean creating new programs; it certainly does not mean starting over. Baltimore already has a rich array of programs aimed at families with young children whose primary purpose is Jewish engagement as well as others where Jewish engagement is a secondary or tertiary purpose. In planning for the future, community leadership needs to understand and assess what is in place already.

This section of the Briefing Book provides the reader with an overview of existing programs in Baltimore whose primary objective is the Jewish engagement of families with young children (i.e. in eighth grade or younger), available in the Baltimore Jewish community.⁸ These are programs that include a significant level of Jewish content and are designed for the family unit as a whole.

Each listing includes the sponsoring congregation or agency, a brief description of the program, its audience, and associated cost of operating the program. This is not an exhaustive inventory of all Jewish family engagement programs; it is reflective of the range of types of available offerings that are on-going in the community.

BALTIMORE HEBREW CONGREGATION

The Toldot Family School

Brief Description

Meets weekly with an emphasis on intergenerational learning. Parents and children learn Hebrew and Judaics together. This pilot program is partially funded by a Blaustein grant from THE ASSOCIATED. The goal of this program is to help parents become more knowledgeable participants in the Jewish education of their children, with the hope that families will spend more time and energy on Jewish activities in the home and synagogue. The specific expectations of the program are to increase and strengthen the following areas:

- Home practice of Jewish rituals;
- Amount of time that families spend together engaged in Jewish experiences;
- Hebrew reading skills and understanding of prayers;
- Levels of comfort and frequency of attendance at worship services in the synagogue;
- knowledge of Torah and Mitzvot;
- ability to identify Jewish values reflected in daily choices;
- bonds of friendship between families;
- connection and commitment to the Jewish Community.

⁸ Jewish family programs where engagement in Judaism, being Jewish or the Jewish community is a secondary or tertiary objective are listed in the Appendix to the Briefing Book.

Family Shabbat Services

Brief Description

- Monthly Shabbat Worship Services for families with stories or Divrei Torah by a Clergyperson. An Oneg after services offers families the opportunity to socialize.
- Tot Shabbat services for families with children in preschool through Grade 2 alternates monthly between a Friday and a Saturday Service.
- Family/Primary Shabbat Services for families with elementary age children. Meets one Friday a month.
- Junior Congregation is recommended for families with children in Grades 3-7. This service is often co-led by student groups such as the High School Honors Class or a specific class.
- Simcha B'Shabbat services include the entire congregation and are open to all families. Services are held in the main sanctuary.

Yearly Holiday and Shabbat Programs and Services for Families

High Holidays include afternoon family services on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and morning programs include educational activities for children. Letters to parents and special worksheets are sent with the children for additional activities in the home.

Sukkot programming consists of a family dinner and service followed by an Oneg in the Sukkah.

Simchat Torah services both focus on families.

Thanksgiving is anticipated in advance at a Friday night worship service. Special activities include making a Thanksgiving "Hagaddah" for use at home on Thanksgiving.

Chanuka programs include a family dinner and service and a Chanukiah making contest. A Chanuka Happening offers lunch, games, crafts, dancing, on a Sunday, after Religious School.

Tu B'Shevat is celebrated with a seder on Sunday morning for Grade 2 families. Following Religious School classes, an intergenerational Tu B'Shevat program is held for families of all ages. Grandparents are encouraged to participate along with parents and children in the luncheon and in the activities, which include crafts, games and a special mitzvah that builds a bridge to Purim. Families make shallach manot baskets, which are sent to college students and nursing homes in time for Purim.

Purim is celebrated with a Sunday afternoon carnival. On erev Purim, there is a family dinner followed by services.

Pesach Parents are involved in model seders that take place in the classrooms.

Primary *Havdalah* for Grades K-2 is a joint program for Religious and Day School families.

ANNUAL EVENTS NOT RELATED TO HOLIDAYS

The Annual Family Retreat which is held at the Pearlstone Retreat Center. The first of these retreats was funded by a JEEP grant from THE ASSOCIATED.

Torah Scribe in Residence

As part of the Chanuka Happening program, families have a hands-on experience in the art of Torah writing.

Yom Mitzvah is an annual family event.

FAMILY PROGRAMS FOR SPECIFIC GRADE LEVELS

Brief Description

Both the Day School and the Religious School have one or two specific Family Education programs that are related to curriculum topics in every grade level from Kindergarten through Eighth Grade. Activities are held during regular school hours and are two to three hours in length. Some examples of topics covered are Jewish Roots, Temple Detectives, Shabbat Can Be, Life Cycle Events, and an Israel Fair.

Number of Families Served

Approximately 500 families participate in from 1 to 6 family programs each month.

Program Budget

\$76,000

BETH EL

The Berman-Lipavsky Religious School

PROJECT MISHPACHA

Brief Description

A two-day a week religious school program for students in grades Aleph-Vav. In addition to the formal curriculum, the program entails the following components:

- Family programs designed both to integrate with the school's level-specific curriculum as well as to reflect Jewish calendar, traditions and history
- Shabbat family services providing age appropriate prayer and inviting all members of the family to participate on many levels in Friday night, Saturday morning and Havdalah services
- Adult education courses that afford parents the opportunity to increase their knowledge of Judaism, enabling them to bring Judaism home to reinforce their children's education
- Tikkun Olam family projects stressing the importance of doing mitzvot and grounding volunteerism within a Judaic framework

Number of families served by the program

Project Mishpacha accommodates approximately 300 students together with their siblings, parents and grandparents. Approximately 100-125 people attend a Shabbat Family Service and approximately 200 adults participate in an average Adult Education session.

Additional Programs

Brief Description

- Weekly Tot Shabbat services that accommodate 35-40 students and their families per service
- Bimonthly Gesher (Bridge) Service that accommodates 15-20 kindergarten and first grade students and their families per service
- Monthly Birthday Aliyah in the Sanctuary, honoring birthday children and their families
- 5 Pre-School Parent workshops on the following topics: values, holidays, Bible stories, and increasing Jewish observance in the home

Family Program Budget

\$86,000

BETH TFILOH CONGREGATION (MERCZAZ)

Havurah Program

Brief Description

Launched last year under the auspices of Mercaz, groups of ten to twelve families meet monthly in homes to celebrate Judaism together through shared study, socialization, and communal activity. Havurah gives families a way of continuing Jewish education and Jewish activities in a shared atmosphere among compatible people. Families learn with each other and from each other, share in each other's joys and sorrows, and travel and nosh with each other. This is an ongoing program that meets at the convenience of its members.

Fee: varies according to program

Sharing Jewish Secrets

Brief Description

Parents of pre-school children meet weekly for coffee and conversation and learn ways to integrate meaningful Jewish customs into everyday family life.

Fee: \$20.00 for Beth Tfiloh Members and Beth Tfiloh School Parents
\$36.00 for the general public

THE CENTER FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

Family Education Programs

Sulam: Ladders to Literature

Brief Description

Family reading program for grades 3-4 and 5-6. Provides the tools and vocabulary needed to discuss issues of Jewish content; encourages families to experience various aspects of Jewish life together.

Number of Families Served by the Program

The program is now operated independently in 19 CJE affiliated schools, both day and religious.

Program Budget

\$4,500

Sulam Salon: Family Book Talk for Teens

Brief Description

Book discussion group for families of students in grades 7-8. Opens the doors to communication on topics of interest to teens including: anti-Semitism, Jewish identity, Holocaust, substance abuse, peer pressure.

Number of Families Served by the Program

94 families

Program Budget

\$10,000

Zimriah Community Songfest

Brief Description

Students from all CJE affiliated schools are invited to sing together on a chosen theme at a widely advertised community event.

Number of Families Served by the Program

Families are invited, 15 schools/1200 people attended in 2000.

Program Budget

\$4,200

The Alef Branch: Celebrating the ABC's of Jewish Life at Home

Brief Description

Jewish Family Ed magazine for families of Pre K-grade 6. In its 9th year of production, this topical Family Education magazine which was created in Baltimore has grown to include input from students in all local CJE affiliated schools, multi-grade activities and a full color format. The creative writing team includes a cadre of skilled educators representing a wide religious cross section of the community.

Number of Families Served by the Program

This publication is distributed to 10,000 households in Baltimore through Jewish schools and selected public sites such as libraries, grocery stores and the JCC. Over 35 communities across the United States also subscribe to this publication.

Program Budget

\$26,000

Nesiyot: Jewish Urban Excursions

Brief Description

By partnering with local destinations such as The Baltimore Aquarium, The Baltimore Museum of Art and The B&O Railroad Museum, this program is designed to infuse

family outings with a Jewish component. Through Nesiyot Resource Kits consisting of a booklet and cassette tape, the Jewish family experience will be enriched Jewish content.

Number of Families Served by the Program

Approximately 350 people in 100 families

Program Budget

\$5,000

COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMMING

Brief Description

The Pearlstone Department of Jewish Family Education has collaborated/consulted with: Jewish Museum of Maryland THE WHOLE MEGILLAH Purim JFE program (2000); JMM HAKOL B'SEDER Passover JFE program (1999); JCC 600,000 PENNIES PROJECT; Goucher ODESSA GROUP; TEEN DRIVING PROGRAM for JCC/Beth Israel, Temple Isaiah, Beth Am, Temple Beth Shalom in Arnold, CJE Department of Professional Development Regional Conference for Educators (1999)

Retreats

Shabbaton and Overnight experiences. The Family Educator has consulted on and programmed retreats over the years, including, but not limited to the following congregations: Chevrei Tzedek Family Retreat, Beth Am, B'nai Mitzvah, Liberty Jewish Center, Beth El's Mishpacha Program, Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, Jewish Family Educators' Network, Pearlstone Retreat for Single Parents, Oheb Shalom/Steven Kaufman Aids Outreach/Jewish Addiction Services Retreat, JCC Adult Services Department Retreat.

Program Budget

\$16,500

Jewish Family Educators Network

Brief Description

Monthly get-together for JFE programmers. With nearly 100 people as part of the Network, this group meets to exchange ideas, brainstorm, tackle pertinent issues in JFE programming and become familiar with community resources.

Program Budget

\$2,000

CHIZUK AMUNO CONGREGATION

Congregation Programs for Young Adults/Young Families

Shabbat/Holiday Young Family Programs

Brief Description

Monthly holiday and Shabbat events and dinners. Last year activities included 3 Shabbat programs, Sukkot, Chanuka, Tu B'Shevat, and a 2nd night Passover Seder. Each month there is a family service, which is followed by dinner and a special activity for the children. Special activities include a Jewish storyteller, a balloon man who made balloons appropriate to the holiday, and a Klezmer band, which allowed for families to dance together at the Chanuka event.

Number of Families Served by the Program

Over 80 different families in total participated in these programs. 100 persons (children included) attend each event.

The Esterson Service for Young Families

Brief Description

A High Holiday Service was initiated in Fall 2000, as part of a membership outreach effort. This effort offered discount membership to the target population, seating them in a designated service where children of all ages could come and feel welcomed. An adult service, with a play/pray corner furnished with blankets, toys, books, etc. was made available and was widely utilized.

Number of Families Served by the Program

55 new member families plus 10 prior member families joined the service.

Future Efforts

In 2000 the YA/YF committee is continuing the same program, as well as co-sponsoring a Young Adults (no children) event before Purim at the Jewish Museum. Havurot based on single/family demographics will begin meeting in the fall of 2001. The Havurot initiative will match families based on particular needs. Families will be encouraged to celebrate Shabbat together and holidays together and to study and learn together.

Program Budget

\$7,500/year budget, plus professional staff time.

Special Programming at Rosenbloom Religious School at Chizuk Amuno

Curriculum Connection Family Programs for Grades K and 2-7

Brief Description

During the year, students of every grade level and their parents come together several times to uncover the meaning of certain aspects of the curriculum. All of these family programs grow out of the curriculum. For each grade level, there is approximately 85% attendance at these family programs.

Programs:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Program</u>
K	Family Sukkah Decorating and Dinner
K	Family Synagogue Search Program
K	Family Purim Program
2	Family Moon Birthday Program
2	Family 4 New Years Program
2	Family Siyyum HaSefer Program
3	Family Havdalah Program
3	Family Havdalah Service
3	Family Israel Program
4	Family Program
5	Family Torah Reading Service
5	Interactive Family Seder Experience
5	Family Mitzvah Program #1: The Meaning of Bar/Bat Mitzvah
6	Family Mitzvah Program #2: Mitzvah Fair and Mitzvah Heroes
6	Family Mitzvah Program #3: Tallit and Tefillin Workshop
6	Family Mitzvah Program #4: Mitzvah Field Trips and Community Service
6	Family Program: The Haftarah-Torah Connection Program
7	Family Graduation Breakfast
7	Family Graduation Study Session and Celebration

Program Budget

Staff Resources	\$17,500	(Grades K, 2-7)
Programming Budget	\$ 4,500	(Grades K, 2-7)

GESHER L'SEFER: A BRIDGE TO THE BOOK FOR GRADE 1

Brief Description

From October through April, parents of children in Grade 1 read Bible stories to their children before the children come to class. In class, the meaning of the stories is uncovered through drama, singing and other activities. There are four monthly study groups for parents on the weekly Torah portions of the grade level curriculum. Several family programs connect the parents and children to the curriculum.

NUMBER OF FAMILIES SERVED BY THE PROGRAM

33 students and their parents participate in these programs

Programs

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Program</u>
1	Mechinah Family Sukkah Decorating and Dinner
1	Mechinah Bet Family Gesher L'Sefer Opening
1	Mechinah Bet Family Name Program
1	Mechinah Bet Gesher L'Sefer Closing
1	Mechinah Bet Parent Parallel Study #1
1	Mechinah Bet Parent Parallel Study #2
1	Mechinah Bet Parent Parallel Study #3
1	Mechinah Bet Parent Parallel Study #4

Program Budget:

Staff Resources	\$3,500	(Grades K, 2-7)
Programming Budget	\$1,500	(Grades K, 2-7)

SCHOOL-WIDE PROGRAMMING

Brief Description

Several times per year, students in all grade levels and their parents (and sometimes other family members) meet for special school-wide programs.

Programs (for all grade levels, K-7)

Aseh Lekha Rav
 Find Yourself a Teacher Open House and Study Day Winter Festival
 Grandparents/Special Friends Day. During regular class hours parents visit their child's classroom and participate in activities with them. During the second hour of class parents and children meet with a local Jewish artist to learn ways of using art in Jewish study.

Program Budget

\$3,000

Other Programs at Chizuk Amuno

Tot Shabbat Service

Brief Description

A special program for the families of children under the age of five. This service is 45 minutes in length and is held on every Shabbat morning and on the High Holidays.

Babysitting is offered for these children for the hour prior to this service so that their parents can daven in the main service and then join their children for Tot Shabbat.

Number of Families Served

Attendance is approximately 15 weekly.

Tikkun Olam Outreach Day

Brief Description

An annual volunteer day where families attend a morning study session led by a rabbi then participate in a variety of community volunteer activities. Examples of those activities include the Kosher Food Pantry, My Sister's Place, a Clothing Drive, physical maintenance of the Synagogue, and planting flowers. All of the schools participate.

Number of Families Served

Attendance is approximately 400 people

Program Budget

\$2,000

Ties that Bind

Brief Description

This is a program for 12-year-olds and their families. These families participate in a series of programs that focus on synagogue skills and regular learning in preparation for bar/bat mitzvah.

Number of Families Served

70 families per year.

HAR SINAI CONGREGATION

P.A.C.T. Program (Parents and Children Together)

Brief Description

Parents and their children learn together approximately one Sunday a month (3rd-5th graders; less often for the K-2nd and 6th-8th graders). Students attend classes every week, and parents attend on scheduled Sundays. Families participate in a Tikkun Olam family project and attend worship services and community events together. The curriculum for students and their parents enhances the curriculum for each grade level.

Parents and their children learn the origin of the Jewish holidays and ceremonies, history and culture. They are provided with hands-on learning of customs and celebrations. Parents learn the background of holidays and ceremonies and are encouraged to bring additional Jewish rituals into their homes.

Number of Clients Served by This Program

130 Children and their parents

Program Budget

\$8,500

JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

Family Life Education Department

I Love Shabbat

Brief Description

Brings together parents and their young children for a Shabbat program, which includes, song, candle lighting, Kiddush, and Challah snack. Ongoing when preschool is in session.

Number of Clients

The committee currently serves 10-30 adult/child families. Ages newborn-30 months.

Bubbie, Zaydie and Me

Brief Description

Grandparents and kids enjoy an hour together with Jewish music, fingerplays, Jewish stories and more.

Number of Clients

10-12 adults/child pairs – ages 12-24 months

Yofi Tofi Musical Program at the JCC

Brief Description

A musical program that combines Jewish learning and entertainment. Parents/caregivers actively participate with children, learning Israeli, Shabbat and holiday songs, as well as American favorites. Activities involve listening, singing, playing rhythm instruments, moving to music and interacting with puppets. The session concludes with a Yofi Tofi performance.

Number of Clients

10-12 adults/child pairs per class

Family Sukkah Building 101

Brief Description

A program for the entire family to learn how to build a Sukkah together and learn about some of the laws and customs of building a Sukkah. A resource list is provided. Children have a chance to make decorations for their own Sukkah.

Number of Clients

8-50 families

Make Your Own Chanukia

Brief Description

Parents and grandparents, with their children (ages 5 up) create a heirloom: a family ceramic Chanukia (oil or candles). Just in time for Chanukah.

Number of Clients

8-18 families – ages 5 and up

Apples & Honey II

Brief Description

Parents, grandparents, and their children (ages 5 and up) participate in a hands-on ceramic class designed to spice up Rosh Hashanah. Learn about the legendary symbols of apples and honey, from the Forbidden Fruit to the Land of Milk and Honey. Participants are given the opportunity to create a family honey pot for the holidays.

Number of Clients

8-18 families – ages 5 and up

Sukkot: A Family Pilgrimage to Jerusalem

Brief Description

This program simulates an ancient pilgrimage to Jerusalem during Sukkot. Families travel back in time to experience the sights, smells, and sounds, of what it was like to journey to Jerusalem and live in a Sukkah. Families visit the petting zoo and also learn Israeli dancing. The evening culminates with a family sing-a-long in “our” ancient city.

Number of Clients

100-300 families

Hands-on Holidays

Brief Description

The Parenting Center hosts a once-a-month holiday special with hands-on learning activities for toddlers and their parents. Each month an upcoming Jewish holiday or ritual is explored and a project completed.

- Rosh Hashanah Happenings
- Simply Sukkot
- Shabbat Fun
- Hooray for Chanuka
- Let’s Celebrate Israel
- Toddlers’ Tu B’Shevat
- Purim Fun
- A Perfect Passover
- Lots of Lag B’Omer Fun
- Shout for Shavuot

Number of Clients

8-20 adults/child pairs per session – ages 6 months-36 months

Family Life Education Department Budget

	<i>Owings Mills</i>	<i>Park Heights</i>
Program Budget:	\$47,471	\$13,520

JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES

Jewish Outreach Network

Provides support and education for interfaith families and for Jews-By-Choice. Addresses special concerns related to intermarriage and conversion. Provides connections to Jewish life. Co-sponsored by the Baltimore Board of Rabbis.

Number of Clients

Serves approximately 280-300 individuals/families per year

Program Budget

\$47,320

Stepping Stones to a Jewish Me

Brief Description

This is a yearlong family education program for unaffiliated families with children ages 3-7. Provides Jewish education, hands on holiday activities, access to synagogue services, and workshops related to challenges faced by interfaith families. Funded by Temple Oheb Shalom in cooperation with the Jewish Outreach Network. Children have class instruction appropriate for their age level on the holidays and Jewish ethics. During the year, the adults and children meet together for activities.

Number of Clients

7-10 families per year

JEWISH MUSEUM OF MARYLAND

Ha Kol B'Seder- Passover Family Day

Brief Description

An afternoon of family Passover activities, which includes: an adult study session, a matza box project, story telling, and creating a Passover family memory book

Number of Families Served

140 children and parents/grandparents

Program Budget

\$2,000

Kids Architectural Workshop

Brief Description

This session was related to the JMM exhibit, *Cornerstones of Community*. Families had an opportunity to build replicas of Jewish neighborhood buildings (from early 1900's East Baltimore) out of art materials, which were then included on a big neighborhood map

Number of Families Served

80 children and parents/grandparents

Program Budget

\$500

A Sweet Light: Chanuka Program

Brief Description

A Chanuka celebration designed for families and adults. The family portion of the program included making synagogue stained glass windows followed by a concert for everyone.

Program Budget

\$200 for the family activity

The Whole Megillah

Brief Description

A Purim family day funded almost entirely by Hoffberger Family Foundation. The afternoon included: a magic show, a Purim basket craft, an adult learning session and the creation of an original Purim play by all of the families.

Program Budget

\$4,200

(\$200 for JMM, \$4,000 for Hoffberger Family Foundation)

Tchotchkes Family Day

Brief Description

Families learned about the Tchotchkes displayed in the JMM's exhibit by making their own Tchotchke figurines and playing Tchotchke BINGO.

Program Budget

\$1,000

Chanuka in Prague

Brief Description

An original program held on December 25th at the JMM. This program features activities for both families and single adults. Participants learn about the Jewish traditions (with an emphasis on Chanuka) of Prague and Eastern Europe by participating in a paper cutting craft, attending a puppet show and listening to a Klezmer concert.

Number of Families Served

150 children and parents/grandparents

Projected Budget

\$3,000

TEMPLE EMANUEL OF BALTIMORE

Family Education

Brief Description

Over the course of the school year, each grade, K-6 has two to four family education programs. Each grade has a theme:

Kindergarten focuses on the holidays,

1st grade focuses on how we treat people, animals, and the earth,

2nd grade is on Shabbat,

3rd grade is on mitzvot,

4th grade is on tradition and changing traditions with a highlight on baby naming,

5th grade is how we treat those with differing abilities,

6th grade is preparing for B'nai Mitzvah.

Depending on the program, there may be “break-out” sessions where students and parents are doing an activity together or sessions where parents and students are having separate discussions or activities on the same topic in the program.

Number of families served

Approximately 150 families are involved. The entire K-6 school is involved. Each grade and family participates in their respective grade. Family Education, like religious school, is only open to members of the congregation.

Additional Programs

Yachad

Brief Description

Students who are three and four years of age learn through art, song, story, etc. about the holidays with their parents. About halfway through the morning, the children will do other activities while the parents have a separate program dealing with a variety of topics. They include:

- Computer programs and videotapes of Jewish interest
- Torah and Bible study related to the holiday
- Holiday traditions (on an adult level)
- Reform Judaism
- Interfaith households

Number of families served

7-12 families register each year for Yachad. Yachad is only open to members of the congregation.

Tot Shabbat

Brief Description

Currently held on the third Shabbat morning each month (September-June), families with very young children, infant to 2nd grade, share a Shabbat service together. They sing Shabbat songs, learn prayers, parade with the Torah, hear and share a story (usually related to the *parsha* of the week). The service runs approximately 30 minutes followed by a small Kiddush. Services are held in the Library/Chapel which gives a more intimate feeling for the 15-25 people who attend.

Number of families served

Tot Shabbat is open to the community at large. Currently about 6 families attend each Tot Shabbat. Some come every month; others once or twice.

Family Services

Brief Description

On the first Friday of each month, there is a Shabbat evening service geared for families. They sing Shabbat songs, learn prayers, parade with the Torah and hear the words from the Torah, hear and share a story (usually related to the *parsha* of the week). On some of the family services, students from the religious school will help in conducting the service. This gives those students who are learning their prayers the opportunity to read out loud in front of a congregation.

Number of families served

Family Services are open to the community are large. Currently, 150-250 people attend the Family Service.

Family Holiday Services

Brief Description

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur morning, Sukkot, Simchat Torah and Purim evening, and on the first Shabbat during Chanuka, there is a family holiday service. They sing holiday songs, learn prayers, hear the words related to the holiday, and do other related rituals associated with the holiday. With the exception of Simchat Torah, when a major parade of the Torahs scrolls is done, services are approximately 45 minutes.

Number of families served

Family Holiday Services are open to the community at large. Currently, about 700 people attend the Family High Holiday services and 200-300 people attend the other Family Holidays Services.

Mitzvah Day and Mitzvah Projects

Brief Description

Over the course of the year, Temple Emanuel has a number of Mitzvah projects. They include:

- High Holiday, Chanuka, and Passover food collections for the Kosher Food Pantry and pantries that accept non-kosher food.

- Toy Drive

- Winter Outerwear Drive

- Adopt a Highway clean-up

- Feed the Hungry (making sandwiches for a soup kitchen)

Once a year, Temple Emanuel has a Mitzvah Day, sometimes coinciding with THE ASSOCIATED Mitzvah Day. Projects include:

- Clean-up of Soldier's Delight

- Working at Harvest Garden

- Spring cleaning and planting in and around the Temple grounds.

Families come together to work with other members of the community in activities that are of particular interest to them and that are age appropriate.

Number of families served

25-50 families participate in hands on projects and many others are involved in donating to these events.

TEMPLE OHEB SHALOM

BRIT, Family School

Brief Description

Adults and children enrolled in the Hebrew school attend a family program together. The adults study with a family educator for half the morning, which is followed by a study and activity period for adults and children together. The families are invited to attend other special programs planned throughout the year including Shabbatonim, special Shabbat dinner and services, and Havdalah at the home of the Rabbi. This program is for first to fifth graders.

Number of Families Served

66 Families

Junior Congregation

Brief Description

A special Shabbat morning service led by students for their families (grades two through seven).

Number of Families Served

Attendance varies from 50-75 people

Tot Shabbat Service

Brief Description

A special program for the families of very young children from the ages of 2-6 years old

Number of Families Served

Attendance is approximately 75 people.

Other Family Programs

Brief Description

On the High Holy Days, a family service is held in the Chapel. Two consecutive services are held on the day of the holiday.

Family education programs are held for each grade during the school year. One major goal for these programs is to assist and promote parent's knowledge in raising Jewish children with a strong Jewish identity.

Family Shabbat retreat during winter break is held in western Maryland. This is an intergenerational program and is attended by 70 people.

Congregational Mitzvah Day has been held for ten years. This is an intergenerational event attended by 200-300 people.

VIII. SUCCESSFUL AND INNOVATIVE MODELS IN OTHER COMMUNITIES

The focus of this part of the Briefing Book is on successful and innovative programs in other communities that help Jewish families with children increase their connection to Judaism, the Jewish community and their own sense of being Jewish. While by no means an exhaustive list of such programs, they do represent important programming ideas that could be adapted, in whole or part, to the unique conditions in Baltimore. These represent the frontiers of national experience; inclusion of a type of program on this list does not imply that the idea of the program is new to Baltimore; in fact, in many instances, similar programs are already underway in Baltimore.

Seven types of programs are presented:

Family Educators in Congregations

- Federation funds (or funds ½) a family educator position for every congregation
- Smaller congregations could share a position
- Central agency provides:
 - model curricula
 - recruitment of educators
 - professional development

Early Childhood Family Education

- A central agency works with three to five early childhood programs in congregations
- Parenting workshops
- Staff training workshops
- Shabbat and holiday kits for parents
- Jewish events & celebrations

Home-based Learning Group and Community Organizer

- A community organizer invites marginally affiliated Jewish families to “do something Jewish together.”
- A small group meets in someone’s home and decides to do an event [e.g. a Lag B’Omer picnic]
- They invite their friends
- Additional events and activities are planned by the group with gentle advice and guidance from the outreach worker

Interfaith/Unaffiliated Outreach Project

- Broad-based programs
 - Sukkot celebration
 - Potluck Shabbat dinners with informal discussions about upcoming holidays

Small group experiences

(e.g. Six-session, eight to ten couples: Raising a Jewish Child in an Interfaith Family)

Public Space Outreach

- Passive outreach: Engage Jewish families during their normal daily activities
- Passover, Sukkot, Shabbat, Chanuka, and the High Holidays
- Jewish story telling in public malls, in department stores, in clothing stores and toy stores.

All-Day Family Sunday School for New Americans

- New American children, parents, and grandparents
- Intensive weekly program of Jewish learning and experience
- Sponsored by the JCC

Community Membership

- Entitles a family to pay a single, reduced fee to access:
A congregation, JCC, Jewish Museum, Jewish Newspaper
- Time limits could be set: e.g. two years

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

The integration of quantitative data from the community survey, the insights from the qualitative research, the local experience and the national experience suggest six major initiatives:

1. Expand the Use of the Jewish Pre-school as a Critical Gateway

The large percentage of Jewish families sending their children to a Jewish pre-school suggests that this is a wonderful way to reach significant numbers of families. There already are programs to engage parents with children in pre-school: these should be replicated and expanded. Qualitative research suggests that families with children enjoy the Jewish connection of having children in pre-school, and that some have a sense of “let-down” after the experience is over, especially if day school is not an option. This suggests a need to focus on creating meaningful post pre-school opportunities for Jewish preschool parents and “alumni.”

Specific Suggestions

- The CJE could develop an early childhood educational support program with the JCC and congregations
 - Staff training in Jewish content (including non-Jewish staff)
 - Shabbat and holiday kits for parents
 - Curriculum and materials for parent workshops (see below)
- The JCC and congregations could offer a weekly informal workshop – parenting and Jewish content for parents of pre-school children (like Beth Tfiloh’s *Sharing Jewish Secrets*)
- The JCC could organize informal, home-based programs of Jewish learning, holiday experiences, and socialization for parents of pre-school “alumni”
- THE ASSOCIATED should establish a pre-school Jewish enrichment fund to support experimentation and replication of successful programs

2. Offer Jewish Family Education with Every Congregational Supplementary School and in Other Appropriate Settings

There is substantial national experience suggesting that Jewish family education – learning programs for parents with children – is an effective vehicle for engaging Jewish families. A number of congregations (as well as the JCC) are making a substantial investment in Jewish family education. Their efforts need to be recognized, supported and replicated. The community, through THE ASSOCIATED and the Center for Jewish Education, can play an important leadership role in a variety of ways, including recruiting, training and funding Jewish family educators.

Specific Suggestions

- THE ASSOCIATED and Center for Jewish Education could convene local and national experts to design a set of model Jewish family education programs, drawing on local experience and national experience.
- CJE could recruit and train educators and market and disseminate the models.
- THE ASSOCIATED, with advice from the CJE, could develop and apply criteria for family education programs and fund Family Educators for approved programs in a congregation, JCC, or other agency or for a consortium (e.g. in a specific neighborhood).

3. Develop a “Welcome to Jewish Baltimore” Marketing Campaign

Six out of ten of the respondents in the community survey with children were not born in Baltimore. In qualitative research, there was a clear feeling expressed that “newcomers”, or more precisely, non-native Baltimoreans, are not always made to feel welcome in the organized Jewish community. Anecdotal evidence surfaced during the informal conversations during the course of the study that suggests that this perception is widely shared. Some people who have moved to Baltimore recently also complained about not knowing how to access information. In the community survey, too many people did not know of the existence of the community’s Jewish Information and Referral Service. The community needs to make a more intensive effort to create both the perception and reality of a welcoming community both to natives and non-natives.

Tentative Suggestions⁹

- THE ASSOCIATED could take the lead in disseminating regular information about Jewish events and opportunities for children and families (see website below)
- The community could hold a “welcome a newcomer” Shabbat (see community-wide vehicles below)
- THE ASSOCIATED could take the lead in developing and disseminating a program of “sensitivity training” for staff and leadership of Jewish organizations

4. Create Community-wide Vehicles for Holidays, Shabbat and Tikkun Olam Projects for Families with Children

National evidence, supported by our local qualitative research, indicates that parents of young children are very open to relatively specific, short-term family experiences. Holidays, Shabbat, and Tikkun Olam (social action) projects seem to fit perfectly with what families seek. Many congregations and agencies have developed activities around such events and programs.

In the Community Survey, many more people indicate that being Jewish was very important to them than the number who either felt part of the community “a lot ” or for whom being part of the

⁹Specifics of “Welcome to Jewish Baltimore” campaign to be developed after conclusion of Marketing component of the Community Study.

community was very important. With this in mind, investing some additional energy in community-wide experiences that families with children would enjoy could create a greater sense of community. Expanding the focus of ASSOCIATED Shabbat from a fundraising and marketing opportunity to a community-building opportunity is an example of this strategy.

Specific Suggestions

- THE ASSOCIATED could convene affiliated agencies, congregations, and Jewish organizations to develop a coordinated annual calendar of holiday observance, community shabbatonim, and Tikkun Olam projects, including a few days during the year when a community-wide event or celebration would take place at many places.
- THE ASSOCIATED, working with congregations and Jewish organizations, could broaden ASSOCIATED Shabbat to include:
 - A Friday night dinner in every congregation, JCC and appropriate Jewish site
 - A special effort to welcome newcomers
 - Community-wide text study related to building community and Tzedakah

5. Develop a Community Membership Program

For many years, people have been writing about, and struggling with, the issue of the cost of living Jewishly. Particularly for people who are interested in, but not deeply committed to, leading an active Jewish life, cost can be a significant barrier, especially for people who are just managing. The community survey indicates that about 30% of the families with children are just managing (or not managing at all). It is urgent that Baltimore, as a leadership community, makes significant progress on this national issue. Fortunately, there is a model currently in use in Baltimore, the J-LINC program, that lowers the cost of participation for young adults, which could serve as a partial model for a community membership program. Of course it will be more difficult to agree on a community membership incentive for families with young children who are more likely to affiliate anyway than are young adults, who are relatively less likely to affiliate.

Specific Suggestions

- THE ASSOCIATED could convene a task force of congregations, schools and the JCC to develop a community membership program for families with young children. A community membership would offer membership in a synagogue, JCC, Jewish Museum and a day school discount for significantly less than the aggregate cost of all elements of the plan. Such a program might include:
 - eligibility based on income
 - a time limit (e.g. a two-year community membership)
 - preference for newcomers (e.g. moved to Baltimore within the last three years)
- It also would be possible for THE ASSOCIATED to offer "earned credits" applicable to discounts on synagogue or Day School fees earned through completion of a Jewish early childhood program. This would support the transition from pre-school into the next stage of Jewish involvement.

6. Develop a Jewish Communal Website for Families with Children

The community survey verifies that Jewish families with children are avid users of the Internet and e-mail; and about half of the Internet users turn to the Web for Jewish information.

Participants in the qualitative study expressed the desire to have timely information about family activities. The development of a communal website for families with children would address the need for timely information. Such a website could be developed as a cooperative venture between THE ASSOCIATED, affiliated agencies and congregations.

Specific Suggestions

- The site would include the Community Calendar of Events
- It would include a Consumer's Guide to Jewish programs, activities, and products for children and families
- This site could be used as a portal to other sites with information about living Jewishly
- The CJE could bring its Alef Branch on-line

CONCLUSIONS

Baltimore is a community with a strong Federation, active congregations and agencies, and a wide array of offerings for families with children. This community has an opportunity to move to a new level of engaging Jewish families in the community, in their own sense of being Jewish and in Judaism.

There are a near-infinite number of good ideas and possible programs in support of Jewish family engagement. There is also much going on already; the emphasis needs to be on improving and building on existing efforts and not reinventing the wheel.

The recommendations presented in this report suggest a clear strategy and set of priorities.

THE ASSOCIATED needs to make the congregations full partners in this expanded effort and to support collaboration and coordination, especially coordination between and among congregations and agencies.

Most important, THE ASSOCIATED needs to recognize the powerful opportunity for community-building represented by families with young children and to translate this recognition into leadership and resources.

APPENDIX

OTHER JEWISH FAMILY PROGRAMS IN THE BALTIMORE AREA WHERE JEWISH ENGAGEMENT IS A COMPLEMENTARY OR SECONDARY OBJECTIVE

APPENDIX: OTHER JEWISH FAMILY PROGRAMS IN THE BALTIMORE AREA WHERE JEWISH ENGAGEMENT IS A COMPLEMENTARY OR SECONDARY OBJECTIVE

These are programs that give families an opportunity to come together in a Jewish environment or that aim at strengthening the Jewish family. These programs typically do not have explicit Jewish content and/or are for children or parents alone, but can be seen as gateways to broader Jewish family involvement. This is not an exhaustive inventory of all Jewish family programs; it is reflective of the range of types of available offerings that are on-going in the community.

BETH TFILOH CONGREGATION

- Enlightened Parent Night
- Roots & Wings: Raising Resilient Children

CENTER FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

- A Jewish Lamaze Experience

JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

- Family Life Education Department
- Infant Massage and Exercise
- Baby Talk
- Stroller Baby
- Toddler Talk
- Swim, Gym and Play
- Building Blocks
- Storytime & PJ's at the "J"
- Art Start
- Parenting Center Sundays
- Jewish Book Festival

- Parenting Lectures
- Family Life Education Department Committee

CHILDREN'S SERVICES & TEEN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

- Single Parent Activities
- Pizza Monday
- Family Connections – A Parent/Child Enrichment Series
- Positive S.P.I.N. (*Special Parent Information Network*)
- Parent/Child Ceramics

JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES

- Adoption Alliances
- Foster Care
- Family Preservation Program
- Child Abuse Prevention Programs
- The Steven Kaufman AIDS Outreach Project (including Risky Behaviors)
- Consultations to Schools and Camps
- Jewish Family Mediation
- Programs for Families of Separation, Divorce, and Remarriage
- Brief Consultation for Separated and Divorced Families